POST-COMMUNIST STRUCTURAL AND VALUES INEQUALITIES: OCCUPATIONAL-CLASS BASIS FOR DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

Postkomunističke strukturne i vrednosne nejednakosti: klasno-profesionalna osnova demokratske konsolidacije

APSTRAKT Analiza podataka iz projekta "Demokratske vrednosti" upućuje na zaključak da postoji izrazita subjektivna hijerarhija medju postkomunističkim zemljama, izmedju ispitanika iz zemalja koje predrugače i onih koje zaostaju u tranziciji. Komparativna analiza brojnih podataka jasno pokazuje kako se predanost ispitanika ovih zemalja demokratskim promenama i demokratskim vrednostima izrazito razlikuje prema stepenu ekonomskog i političkog razvoja njihovog društva i stepenu uspeha koji je ostvaren u tranziciji. S druge strane, postoji izrazita razlika u mišljenjima ispitanika prema statusnoj grupi ili profesionalnoj klasi kojoj svako od njih pripada. Svodjenje društvenih klasa na osnovnih pet profesionalnih grupa, svodjenje koje je zasnovano na klasičnim i savremenim studijama društvene stratifikacije, kao i komparativna analiza ostvarena na ovoj osnovi, uvedljivo idu u prilog zaključku da postoji trajna korelacija: jasno oblikovana statusna hijerarhija u pogledu prihvatanja demokratskih vrednosti. Ova statusna hijerarhija važi u okvirima svake posebne postkomunističke zemlje, bez obzira na različiti stepen njihovog uspeha prilikom tranzicije. Navedeno je nekoliko ilustracija kojima se u raznim prilikama ponavlja i ponovo potvrđuje stabilna veza izmedju statusa i stavova u pogledu individualizma i kolektivizma, liberalizma i statizma, egalitarizma, prihvatanja principa tržišne ekonomije, prihvatanja demokratije ili socijalizma kao koncepata ili prakse, stava prema totalitarnim i diktatorskim režimima, stepena konsolidacije oko evropskih vrednosti, itd. Ukratko rečeno, zemlje koje su pokazale napredak i one koje zaostaju u postkomunističkoj tranziciji su slične u pogledu grupa visokog statusa, a razlikuju se u pogledu slojeva nižeg statusa.

KLJUČNE REČI postkomunizam, strukturne i vrednosne nejednakosti, demokratska konsolidacija

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ABSTRACT The data analysis from ‘Democratic Values’ Project leads to the conclusion that there is a distinct subjective hierarchy among post-communist countries, between respondents from lagging and outpacing countries. Comparative analysis of the numerous data shows clearly how the commitment of respondents in these countries to democratic changes and democratic values is distinctly differentiated according to the degree of economic and political development of their societies and the degree of success achieved in their transition. On the other hand, there is a significant differentiation of opinions of respondents according to the status group or occupational class to which each person belongs. The reduction of social class groups to five basic occupational classes, a reduction based on classical and contemporary studies of social stratification, and the comparative analysis realized on this basis, convincingly support the conclusion that there is a sustained correlation: a clearly shaped status hierarchy with regard to acceptance of democratic values. This status hierarchy is valid within the frameworks of each separate post-communist country, regardless of their different degrees of success in the transition. A number of interesting illustrations are adduced, repeating and reconfirming on various occasions the stable link between status and attitudes with regard to individualism and collectivism, liberalism and statism, egalitarianism, the acceptance of the market economy principles, the acceptance of democracy or of socialism as concepts and practice, the attitude towards totalitarian and dictatorial regimes, the degree of consolidation around European values, etc. To sum it up, the outpacing and lagging countries in the post-communist transition look alike in their high-status groups and differ in their low-status strata.

KEY WORDS post-communism, structural and values inequalities, democratic consolidation

In a previous analysis of empirical data from the ‘Democratic Values’ Survey (1999-2004), we reached the conclusion that the material conditions of a large part of the population of Bulgaria are prevalently unsatisfactory, and this, together with disappointment that small progress has been achieved in the course of the transition, and with discontent over political corruption, has led to considerable clusters of negative valuations, and to extremely critical and negative estimations of the current economic and political situation. All this is a strong factor of erosion, a factor that increases the secondary positive legitimization of the former society and enlarges the large contingent of people who are nostalgic about the communist past, perceived as a more secure time, economically calmer, a time when life was cheaper. This has resulted in growing attitudes of reservation toward democratic values and the democratic consolidation of Bulgarian society.

3 The survey was carried out in 11 post-communist countries in September 2000 as a part of a large international project under the same title within the 5th FP of EC (HPSE-CT-2001-00062), under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Detlef Pollack from European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (O), Germany. Data from the same survey will be commented later in the text.

4 Cf. the text in: www.democraticvalues.eu.tf and in: http://amed.hit.bg
In order to put these conclusions in a clearer and broader perspective we should go beyond the framework of the Bulgarian case and place and analyze the facts in a wider comparative context of post-communist transformation in the various countries of Eastern and Central Europe. (Cf. Pollack, Jacobs, Müller and Pickel 2002: xiv-xvii). In pursuing this line of discussion, we should discuss at least three circles of questions: 1) Fluctuations of the economics/politics dependence and the new cleavages, regarding the correlation between the economic situation of the country and household and the degree of consolidation around democratic values? 2) New post-communist stratification: to what degree does belonging to different social strata underlie the different degrees or clusters of acceptance of democratic values and political situation? 3) Relevance of post-communist stratification to convergence/divergence tendencies.

**Fluctuations of the economics/politics dependence and the new cleavage**

The data of the Democratic Values Survey (2000) have repeatedly confirmed that this linear correlation and direct interdependence between the attitudes to the economy of the country and to the political system receives strong statistical support. The comparison of data on national samples regarding this issue shows an impressively categorical cleavage between post-communist countries, a division into two qualitatively different groups. It is interesting to note that the responses define two distinct groups of countries, a division that corresponds to the well familiar difference in the progress made by various countries in the post-communist transition. This figure can be a good emblem for the relevance of results of the Democratic Values Survey:

Following this line of comparison, two familiar “blocks” of countries can be constructed, that of the lagging and the outpacing on the transition road. This shows the relevance of findings in the international study and how realistic the assessment of respondents is with regard to the achievements of the economy and the governance in the two groups of countries. In post-communist countries the attitude toward the political system and its values is not independent of, but is to a considerable degree interconnected with, the attitude toward the economic circumstances in a macro and micro perspective, to the point of amounting to a consequence of the latter. The findings of the study have in many instances supported this conclusion with regard to both groups of countries.

The conclusion that the strong dependence between valuations of the economic situation of the household and of the economy at large, and between assessments of the economy and the governance of the country, is a basis for a new division among post-communist countries – it is also confirmed by ranking of countries according to the level of personal satisfaction with the accomplished changes in life. The crystallization of the new typology of kinds of post-communism
is an important part of the deeper explanation of the causes of fluctuation in the different degrees of consolidation toward democratic values and institutions.5

Figure 1. Assessment how the economy and government work – by countries6

Ivan Szelenyi7 confirms the conclusion that there are some evident specific differences between the countries undergoing it. The expression “East European countries” actually breaks down to “countries of Central Europe” and “countries of South-Eastern Europe”. There is a quantity of empirical proofs in support of the clear division between countries with neo-liberal regimes (such as Hungary and Poland) and those with neo-patrimonial regimes (Bulgaria, Romania, Russia). The Central European case may be termed “capitalism without capitalists” (this is the variant of Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland), while that of the South-Eastern

5 The conclusion that there is a distinct cleavage among post-communist countries is in fact assumed hypothetically in the Democratic Values Project.
6 Estimations in Figure 1 are results on the subjective assessments between –100 and +100, where –100 (the bottom and the left) is the worst, and +100 (the top and the right) is the best. 0 can be accepted as a medium or neutral position.
7 Professor of sociology and political sciences at Yale University; analyzing the mass of empirical data collected from six post-communist countries in the framework of the international Poverty Project in 2000, the same time when the field survey of the Democratic Values Project was carried out.
European countries and Russia⁸ may be called “capitalists without capitalism”. (Szelenyi 2002: 8–14; Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley 2000). This distinction between the two basic types of post-communism has become established as a recurring theme in comparative studies since the late 1990s. The distinction, discussed earlier, between lagging and outpacing countries is in the same line.

What is the explanation for this sustained cleavage, for the new, firmly fixed social difference between these countries, a difference that had grown smaller under the leveling impact of socialism, but which reappeared since the mid-1990s? One of the hypotheses, suggested by Szelenyi, is that the causes lie in the presence or absence of continuous cultural traditions of capitalism and modernization, in the stable and permanent reproduction of rational and enterprising social capital. The types of assessments in post-communist societies are “strongly influenced by national traditions from pre-communist times” as well as by economic crises, aggravated by social inequality, ineffective political institutions, and by disappointment stemming from patrimonial expectations from the rich and developed West, and cultural inheritance from the communist regime during the socialization (Cf. Pollack, Jacobs, Müller and Pickel 2002: xiv; Jacobs, J., O. Müller and G. Pickel. 2003).

**New post-communist stratification: a logical generalization of strata**

The conclusion that the new cleavage among post-communist countries, between lagging, neo-patrimonial and outpacing, neo-liberal societies is very general and needs to be further concretized within each country. On the one hand, there is the difference between the separate countries: the respondents’ assessments of the economy and governance and respectively their attitudes towards democratic values in each country, taken as a whole, are distinctively different. On the other hand, there is a difference within each country, a significant internal differentiation of opinions and assessments; without taking this into account, we could not understand why and how there are different attitudes toward democratic changes, why and how there are different degrees of affiliation with democratic values in different countries. The causes of the difference in attitudes and assessments could be clarified if we succeeded in distinguishing the social characteristics of the bearers of opinions, if we defined the basic social subjects, if we identified the social groups and strata underlying these attitudes and assessments. The location of individuals and their families within the class-stratification structures, their belonging to different social groups, predetermines their style and way of life, their

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⁸ In principle, it would be more expedient to consider Russia as a separate case, in which multiple factors are at work, factors that are not present to the same degree in the other post-communist countries.
way of thinking, the specifics of their attitudes, assessments, and expectations, their behavior in society.

In order to correctly use the stratification section in the analysis of the data, we would have to make a number of additional enlargements and uniting of groupings based on the answers to the question: "What is/was your last occupational status?" used in the Democratic Values Survey. These amalgamations into larger units should be based on a very detailed knowledge of the actual distribution and reproduction of adult population across social groups and strata in the respective country, and over a long period of time at that. That is why I will here venture to first discuss only the Bulgarian case, and then attempt to apply the model to other countries.

The classical criterion for the generalized classification is the status hierarchy of the occupational classes, the specific position they occupy in the vertical scale according to occupational prestige, a criterion made familiar through its extensive use by Donald Treiman since the second half of the 1970s. After several steps of enlargement of categories used in the survey, I obtained five familiar occupational classes: 1) Professionals, 2) Routine employees, 3) Skilled manual workers and technicians (Skilled workers), 4) Blue collar unskilled manual workers (Unskilled workers), 5) Agricultural workers. This gives us a good reason to consider that the five categories or groups represent the entire occupational class structure in a more reduced, generalized version; we may hence expect substantial social group differences that are significant enough. In addition, each of the five generalized categories has a sufficiently high percentage and makes statistical analysis possible. For the purposes of more complicated, multiple statistical analyses, still another, final generalization of the occupational classes is (still)possible, beyond which any further enlargement would be senseless. This last step is simply the generalization into a category designated by the very term occupational classes or occupational class structure. The data and analyses of the real stratification in Bulgaria over the last thirty years and more, as presented thoroughly in the quoted publication of 2002, give us grounds for this final generalization. In following up the conclusions of a number of previous analyses, we may generalize, that the five basic occupational classes can be reduced to only three categories. The new classification, generalized to the utmost, of the occupational classes is: 1) Highly-prestigious, 2) Intermediate-prestigious, 3) Low-prestigious. Despite the rough approximation of group differentiation, this last division into three status levels is

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10 Apart from the substantial considerations presented below, the amalgamation of categories into larger units is imposed by practical considerations as well, such as convenience in subsequent statistical analysis.
valuable when multiple variables are used, for outlining the major trends for a given combination of more numerous traits. These distinctions and enlargement closely followed the well-known generalizations, like in EGP or Goldthorpe's schema\(^\text{11}\).

Table 1. Correspondence between ‘Democratic Values’ Survey scale and the brief versions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democratic Values Survey scale</th>
<th>Five-elements brief version</th>
<th>Three-elements brief version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer/manager of establishment with 10 or more employees</td>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>Highly-prestigious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer/manager of establishment with less than 10 employees</td>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>Highly-prestigious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freelance, self-employed</td>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>Highly-prestigious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar higher level non-manual</td>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>Highly-prestigious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar middle level non-manual</td>
<td>Routine employees</td>
<td>Intermediate-prestigious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar junior level non-manual</td>
<td>Routine employees</td>
<td>Intermediate-prestigious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar foremen and supervisor</td>
<td>Skilled workers and technicians</td>
<td>Intermediate-prestigious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar skilled manual worker</td>
<td>Skilled workers and technicians</td>
<td>Intermediate-prestigious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar semi-skilled manual worker</td>
<td>Skilled workers and technicians</td>
<td>Intermediate-prestigious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar unskilled manual worker</td>
<td>Unskilled workers</td>
<td>Low-prestigious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer: employer, manager on one account</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural worker</td>
<td>Agricultural workers</td>
<td>Low-prestigious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of armed forces</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident that the five occupational classes are represented in most countries with a quantitative share that is significant enough, which permits further multi-dimensional statistical analysis. Notably low is the percentage of agrarian workers in East Germany and Slovenia, and of unskilled workers in East Germany in the survey sample, which can partially be explained with the predominance of skilled workers there. Otherwise, the high share of low-prestigious groups in Bulgaria is not surprising. The similarity of occupational class structure of post-communist countries is not a surprising fact at all for experts in class-stratification studies (Cf.: Lipset, S. M. and R. Dobson. 1973; Langlois et al. 1994: 1-6,20,39-42; Evans 1996, 1997; Marshall 1997: 1-9; Kivinen, ed. 1998; Evans, Mills 1999; Treiman and Ganzeboom 2000:124-125; Domanski 2000: 6-13; 45-68, 129-144; Tilkidjiev 2002: 308-332, etc.).

Below I present the distribution of the enlarged five occupational classes in various countries, a scheme that will serve in the further analysis.

\(^{11}\) Evans, Mills 1999; Goldthorpe 1997b.
Table 2. Distribution of occupational classes by countries (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
<th>Routine employees</th>
<th>Skilled workers</th>
<th>Unskilled workers</th>
<th>Agricultural workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Germany</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next step is to attempt verifying the stability of the distribution of the defined social strata first for Bulgaria and then for the other post-communist countries today, i.e. their internal status consistency (in the sense of Gerhard Lenski), how internally homogenous they are as groups with regard to completed educational level, with regard to how their occupations correspond to their education, and concerning their income level. It is important to provide a distinction as to whether the respondents in the five groups were economically active, pensioners, or unemployed by the time of the fieldwork. We also have to answer the question: to what extent is the classification of the five occupational classes, deduced for the Bulgarian case, also applicable to the other ten post-communist countries? There is a positive answer to the necessary class consistency.\footnote{In order to establish whether the separate categories, as defined by a given category trait, have some internal structure and inner differentiation, i.e. whether a given kind of statistical grouping is homogenous, in our analysis we used Bonferoni's test of homogeneity of distribution, a specific statistical approach based on the procedure of breaking down the dispersion to its components and making individual comparisons between the separate categories of the studied trait, defined according to some other trait, usually presented on the survey scales. The Bonferoni's test was made by Martin Dimov.}

**A new status order: The class basis of post-communist democratic consolidation**

The analysis of the full data from each of the eleven countries, as well as from the application of the five occupational classes, leads to the general conclusion that a stable status hierarchy is preserved and reproduced; in it the professionals are in a top position, the routine employees and skilled workers and technicians are in the intermediate, and blue-collar urban unskilled manual and agriculture workers are at the bottom. The hierarchy, following in principle the ordering by occupational status, both is the result of the respective individual achievements and determines to a considerable degree the other parameters of their representatives in the social
structure in a way that corresponds to the classical definitions in the theory of social stratification in modern and post-modern societies (Duncan 1961; Blau and Duncan 1967; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Blossfeld and Shavit 1992; Treiman and Ganzeboom 2000).

This dependence is confirmed by the data and analyses of the ‘Democratic Values’ Survey, as we will see further on. In a few preliminary words, a strict hierarchy emerges – one that corresponds to the status hierarchy – in connection with the strong dependence between social status, occupational class level, and the assessments about the achieved democratic changes respectively, hence the affiliation to democratic principles and practices as a whole. This is not unusual, as it is in keeping with the sociological traditions: attitudes toward democratic values are not an abstract appendage, but are usually directly connected to and stem from the daily existence of their bearers. The social group affiliation of people is nothing but a category generalization of their everyday life, of the material, economic, and cultural situation in which they and their families live, of their style and way of life. It is only natural to expect that the style and way of life predetermine to a great extent the way people think and behave, their attitudes, assessments, and expectations.

In this line of reasoning, we might formulate a general hypothesis in the context of the dichotomy or rather the continuum of “materialistic-post-materialistic values” (Inglehart 1977; 1997; Inglehart and Rabier 1986). The less people and societies have overcome material-economic hardships (which is the case of the transition laggers, Bulgaria, Romania, and Russia), the more “materialistic” values predominate, the more directly thinking and valuation about present developments and the future depend on the lag of economic progress in the respective society, especially on the unsatisfactory material welfare of individuals and their families and households. This is the basis for the reservations of such people about post-communist democratic and market change. And conversely, when societies are more advanced, “outpacing” in the transition (such as East Germany, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland), the dependence on “materialistic” values becomes more mediate, less direct, assumes more variations, and bears a stronger influence of “post-materialistic values”13. This is true at the level of each of these societies taken as separate wholes. The same regularity in a more detailed and precise way can be traced at the level of social stratification within each of the separate societies: the lower-prestigious groups (unskilled workers and agrarian workers), whose households are in a worse material-economic situation, and who lead a harder life,

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13 This conclusion refutes the idea that people in the “lagging” post-communist countries are too attached to ideological communist Utopias, and that material security and material acquisitions should be something of secondary importance for them. It turns out that, to the contrary, their material dissatisfaction with the material aspect of their lives, the material hardships of their lives are of primary importance to them.
are characterized by the stronger prevalence of “materialistic values”. In addition to this there are specific difficulties in the lives of the elderly population, which is numerically predominant among these groups in Bulgaria as a rule. Hence their reservations with regard to the post-communist democratic and market change. Conversely, the higher status groups (of which professionals are a typical case), whose standard of life is better and who experience less hardships in the course of the transition, are more “post-materialistic” in their thinking, which permits them to be more optimistic and to accept the post-communist changes more positively, to accept the values of democracy and market economy.

This conclusion at these two levels – by types of countries and by occupational classes – has been established repeatedly in the analysis of data in the ‘Democratic Values’ Survey. Further on I will adduce examples supporting and supplementing such a conclusion. The sustained dependence between class basis and democratic consolidation has the properties of a causal dependence: The specific position in the class structure defines the respective degree of democratic consolidation.

How can we define the more important questions? From the questionnaire I selected the following set of ten clusters of indicators:

What, for different people, are the qualities and conditions that make for success, achievements, progress in life?

To what degree do people rely on their individual personal efforts, or else wait for the state to provide for them?

How inclined are people to liberal or egalitarian ways of thinking: do they accept as justified the social differences resulting from how people use their chances, or do they accept equal distribution of income without income differences?

Do they accept the principles of liberalism, including the ideas of market economy – freedom of enterprise, freedom of personal choice and of personal initiative?

How important do they consider the respect and observance of institutional order and legality?

How definitely do people of different class groups adopt the principles of democracy? How much do they endorse the principles of socialism? Do they unconditionally embrace democracy as a practice, as a valid form of governance?

I will try to demonstrate this causal dependence by showing how people of different class groups consider a wide circle of democratic values, norms, principles. For this purpose we will propose three-dimensional statistical distributions. The data refer to the answers of each of the five groups, and in each country separately. We focus on the results for one of the variants of response that we consider most distinct for the concrete question, i.e. the percentage of respondents indicating the option “Totally agree.”
To what extent do they accept socialism as an appropriate form of governance; what kind of nostalgia is there for the past socialist regime?

Is there a clear position against totalitarian and dictatorial regimes?

How inclined are people to show personal political activity?

To what degree are people attached to European values and norms, how much do they identify themselves as Europeans and accept the accession to the European Union, in the course of Western states as the best perspective?

What, for different people, has an important role in life: job, leisure time, religion or/and politics?

I believe that this set of circles of indicators provides us adequately enough with arguments for or against the existence of a class basis of democratic consolidation. These indicators trace to the greatest degree the social portrait of the basic occupational classes.15

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Those showing highest rates of individualism, i.e. the belief that people should rely foremost on their own efforts, not on state guarantees, are respondents in the “outpacing” countries of the post-communist transitions, Czech Republic (total average value 4.1 from 1 to 7), Slovenia (4.0), and East Germany (3.9). Conversely, the most inclined to statist attitudes are the people in lagging countries, Bulgaria (3.3), Romania (3.3), Slovakia (3.0). Second, the conclusion about all countries is that the high-prestigious groups also have high mean values, i.e. people in these groups have stronger individualist, non-statist attitudes - professionals show the highest values of individualism, they are most inclined to individualist and non-statist stereotypes (4.8 for Czechs’, 4.5 – for Slovenian, 4.4 – for East-German; at the same time 4.4 for Estonian, 4.3 – for Russian, 3.8 – for Bulgarian and Slovakian, etc.). On the other side are the manual agricultural workers (2.3 for Bulgarians, 2.5 – for Romanians, etc.), who rely first on guarantees from the state to provide their living standard.

The same is with the continuum “liberalism-statism”.16 and fully confirms my previous conclusions about the differentiation by countries and occupational

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15 In our further reasoning, it is important to consider that the vertical sum total of the relative shares in the tables is not equal to 100 %. For greater precision, we will take not simply the relative shares of the answers “Fully agree” in each group with respect to the total sample of each country, but the relative shares of the answers “Totally agree” in the framework of each group separately. The meaning of this procedure is to eliminate the influence of the varying sizes of the class groups within each national sample. For instance, the group of skilled workers in the Bulgarian case is the biggest one – 30.8%, and it would be represented in highest proportion in the answers only owing to its size; this would distort the analysis; it would be more exact to take another distribution, the share of the responses out of that group alone, not in proportion to the entire national sample.

16 These two scales are essentially and in practice usually connected in people’s way of thinking. We may suppose that the individualistically minded person is also more liberal in attitudes, and will express approval for a society providing opportunities for gaining higher remuneration for more
classes. The status hierarchy and its direct correlation with the more liberal view is preserved. Higher status groups have clear and more liberal attitudes and lower status groups are more egalitarian in their thinking. Professionals in different countries are the ones with most definitely liberal attitudes.

* * *

The respondents from the more advanced post-communist countries (such as East Germany, Czech Republic, Poland) demonstrate higher percentages of positive approval of the “principles of market economy”; but they are not the only ones: a positive attitude toward market economy is shown by people in countries such as Estonia, Romania, and Bulgaria. This can be explained by the extensive acceptance of the new type of market thinking, regardless of the uneven economic development of different countries and regardless of the delay in economic reforms of some countries. On the other hand, these data show once again that the largest percentage of those who accept the principles of market economy are once again the professionals, the next in order of approval and being the next in the social status hierarchy are the routine employees and skilled workers. The lower status groups have more reservations about market economy (probably due to the fact that they comprise the highest shares of “losers” from economic reforms). Only 12.9% of Bulgarian and 8.7% of Russian unskilled workers make the number of those who “totally agreed” and “agreed” with these principles. This rule is indeed clearer for Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The same rule is confirmed as well as by the statement “Allowing business people to gain maximal profit is the best way of increasing overall living standard”.

The high unconditional support for the question of importance to respect laws and institutions is impressive. In the less advanced countries, the population feels a stronger need for stricter laws, for resisting illegal acts and organized crime, which

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17 Two of the indicators in the case were the approval of the respondents of the statements “It is a government obligation to reduce income differences” and “Social differences are valuable as they show differences in abilities between individuals”.

18 Of course, there are many causes for egalitarian thinking; some of them are: political-ideological doctrines; personal social position (personal disadvantageous social position, such as that of most pensioners in post-communist countries); crime, corruption, shady economy, etc.; the role of connections; the disproportion between the level of remuneration for the same kind of work in different branches, firms, etc.; lack of a smoothly working labor market offering better paid work or additional work, i.e. the lack of real opportunity for liberal behavior, for enterprise, etc. All this, separately and together, generates resistance to large income differences.

19 Probably, especially in the lagging countries there is an influence on the opinions of the use in a larger scale of non-legitimate and semi-legitimate means for earning, including criminal and shady economy.
is part of the daily public debate. Not surprisingly, professionals in this case indicate the highest degree of support for respect of the legal and institutional order.

* * *

Table 3. “Idea of Socialism is always good” by occupational classes and countries (% of totally agreed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
<th>Czech Republic</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>East Germany</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Romania</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Slovakia</th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine employees</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled workers</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled workers</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural workers</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How are the principles and practice of democracy assessed? First, in all countries professionals are the ones most positively, categorically in support of democratic principles, taken as a set of ideas and norms. Here the data also present the familiar correspondence of status hierarchy to the degree of attachment to democratic values; the higher the status of the occupational class is, the higher is the percentage of “total agreement” with the given statement; conversely, low-prestigious groups show a lower degree of agreement with the statement that democratic principles are always a good thing. This hierarchy is quite typical for Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The strongest support for the statement comes from professionals in East Germany (60.6%); the weakest, from agrarian workers in Russia (2.9%).

This conclusion about attachment to democratic ideas and practices stands out in higher relief when we compare the attitudes with opinions about an opposite form of government – socialism as an idea and practice, and with the degree of nostalgia for the past socialist regime. We immediately notice that the values are shifted from their usual configuration in the previous distributions by countries and groups. First, the percentages of definite support for socialism as an idea and practice are rather low: the shares of positive estimations are comparatively low in Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, Slovenia. Among these countries, which are dynamically developing Westward, the reference to socialism is not a topical issue. For Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, there is an evident correlation indicating that the high status groups have more reservations about socialist ideas and practice, while the most attached to socialist principles and governance are the low-status groups, agrarian workers and unskilled workers. This is understandable, as the latter groups comprise elderly people who, being less educated and less qualified, are definitely among the losers in the post-communist transition. The only exception to
the rule is found in data from East Germany, where precisely the high-skilled groups are most supportive of socialist ideas (probably the qualification made previously and the presence of the widely supported “Party of Democratic Socialism” has something to do with it). This commentary is supported by the specific circumstances that East Germans are much more inclined to accept socialism as an idea, but not as an universally valid form of government. In Russia the case is obviously different: there, socialism both as an idea and as practice is supported by roughly equal shares in the occupational classes (though with low percentages), which is probably due to the long line of reproducing pro-socialist generations.

Table 4. “Socialism is an appropriate form of government” by occupational classes and countries (% of totally agreed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>East Germany</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Romania</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Slovakia</th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine employees</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled workers</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled workers</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural workers</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In nine of the ten countries there is the same correlation (we have all reasons to call it a regularity), that the most nostalgic are the low-status groups of unskilled workers and agrarian workers. The characteristic order of relative size of the categorically nostalgic groups is present in: Bulgaria, Rumania, Russia, Slovakia, but also Hungary, Estonia, etc. Slovenia is an exception; the degrees of attachment there not corresponding fully to statuses. The highest percentage of people who “miss” the past times of socialism is registered among Bulgarian unskilled workers and agrarian workers, which I have already discussed in a previous material as “secondary legitimization of the past”. Nearly half of people of this group are strongly nostalgic, and considerable nostalgia is indicated in other groups as well.

Answering the question whether they agree with the statement that “We should return to socialist government”, the respondents are again differentiated in their responses. Partially or completely with ‘pro-communist’ attitudes are the low-status groups of agrarian workers and unskilled workers, who “totally agree” or “agree” to return back... This is true in the case of these groups in Bulgaria (58.2% of agricultural and 41.5 of unskilled workers), Russia (57.1 of agricultural and 50.7 of unskilled workers), Slovakia, Rumania, but also of significant parts of these groups in Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland. A higher percentage of the high-status groups support this option among the better-educated groups again in Russia,
Bulgaria, Slovakia, i.e. in the countries that have not detached themselves to a very far distance from their past probably because of the timid, hesitant, inconsistent, or faulty reforms. In a similar sense, but also in a different one, we interpret the attitude of people toward the introduction of dictatorial regimes under certain circumstances.

Table 5. “I felt satisfied with socialism” by occupational classes and country (% of totally agreed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>East Germany</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Romania</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Slovakia</th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>21,1</td>
<td>1,9</td>
<td>4,2</td>
<td>3,0</td>
<td>11,3</td>
<td>6,1</td>
<td>4,7</td>
<td>12,2</td>
<td>15,1</td>
<td>12,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine employees</td>
<td>20,4</td>
<td>5,3</td>
<td>10,6</td>
<td>5,7</td>
<td>14,4</td>
<td>8,6</td>
<td>8,9</td>
<td>15,4</td>
<td>21,2</td>
<td>14,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled workers</td>
<td>26,1</td>
<td>7,7</td>
<td>18,8</td>
<td>9,3</td>
<td>23,4</td>
<td>7,8</td>
<td>15,6</td>
<td>22,7</td>
<td>26,0</td>
<td>20,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled workers</td>
<td>46,3</td>
<td>12,1</td>
<td>25,8</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>39,4</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>17,9</td>
<td>29,7</td>
<td>29,9</td>
<td>14,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural workers</td>
<td>48,2</td>
<td>11,1</td>
<td>22,6</td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>23,3</td>
<td>9,4</td>
<td>29,0</td>
<td>25,7</td>
<td>31,3</td>
<td>20,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have obtained data also concerning willingness for personal political activity that completely support the familiar regularity of the correspondence between the status hierarchy of occupational classes and the positive engagement in the social renewal processes. The larger part of the higher-status groups in various countries express such a willingness – in East Germany, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Estonia. Naturally, these and similar data concerning the level of personal political activeness must be analyzed by considering the concrete national political and economic context.

A positive answer to the question concerning European self-identification is typical for a considerable part of the population in most post-communist countries. This explains the high percentage of people identifying themselves with Europe in all professional groups of Hungarians, Poles, Slovenians, Czechs, closely followed by Slovaks. On the other hand, among lagging countries there is a certain Euro-skepticism, nurtured by the unsuccessful reforms and unsatisfactory living level and by the lack of visible time references for accession to the European Union. Russia and Bulgaria are in this position: two and three times less people in these countries identify themselves as Europeans. For instance, there are frequent, almost daily comments in Bulgarian public debate about the difficulties in the pre-accession negotiations and in the actual processes of approaching the European Union, obstacles such as low standard of living, low income of the population, lack of serious investments, corruption among politicians and the judiciary. It is quite probable that this debate, which mentally pushes further away the time of actual accession to the family of developed European countries, has a strong impact on the feeling of belonging to Europe.
The correlation indicating that people in high-status groups have the highest degree of European self-identification is preserved. This is true not only for Polish, Hungarian, Czech, and Slovenian professionals but also for the Slovak and Estonian, as well as for the Rumanian ones, as mentioned before. Conversely, the least affiliated to the European identity are low-status groups. Of the ten countries and all groups in them, Bulgarian agrarian workers and Russian unskilled workers are the ones who least feel they are Europeans.

* * *

Among these four spheres of human activity, work proved to be the most highly valued. Within this general statement, specific ways and forms of its concrete validity are evident by countries and by social groups. For some of the countries, and it is probably no coincidence that these countries are more advanced in their development, there is approximately the same high assessment in all groups about the importance of work in the lives of the respondents. This is true for Slovenians, Estonians, Hungarians, Czechs, Poles. The high value attached to labor activity in the lives of people in these more advanced societies is very indicative and symptomatic. In the rest of the countries there is the familiar hierarchization of the attitude towards labor, corresponding to affiliation to a specific group. Work plays a much more important role in the life of high-status groups and is not so significant for groups of lower status such as agrarian workers and unskilled workers.

As a conclusion of the analysis in this part: there is sufficient empirical ground for inferring that a new post-communist stratification is present and being reproduced in the ten examined countries. The attachment to democratic values is a complex process and is demonstrated in different forms and degrees; behind the various assessments of respondents on the social-economic orientation and the political situation in which they live, lies a distinct difference in their style and way of life; their responses are based on their belonging to different occupational classes, each with well-established characteristics of social-economic and cultural status. The concrete social status of the respondents’ families shapes and predetermines the degree of consolidation toward democratic values. The data by occupational classes in the various countries give the impression of a growing similarity in the shares of basic groups in all post-communist countries, and of a growing similarity in the correlation between hierarchies by social status and by degree of attachment to the democratic principles, norms, behavior. In practice this means that the same type of social groups, the same occupational classes in all post-communist countries are in a similar way behind the categorical acceptance of democratic values. What clearer confirmation could there be of the existence of a new post-communist class-stratification social basis of the democratic processes?!
Relevance of post-communist stratification in the convergence/divergence tendencies

The post-communist countries are not isolated, but exist in the context of a dynamically developing world. Convergence-divergence tendencies show their force both in the framework of the post-communist world itself and in its correlation with the developed Western world (cf. Domanski 2000; Tilkidjiev 1998; 2002: 308-332). The new cleavage established and sustained among post-communist countries since the late 1990s can be verified through analysis of a summary question. It is the question of self-assessment of the overall position of the respondents and their families.

The different subjective estimation about the respondents and their families can be visually presented more clearly by using Jonathan Kelley’s “pictorial approach to classes” (Evans, Kelley, Kolosi, 1992: 462-480)\textsuperscript{20}. Extremely interesting and exceptionally characteristic figures of the stratified social body are obtained, with different configurations derived from the seven “subjective social strata”.

Comparison between data of different post-communist countries shows that in the lagging countries respondents perceive their present-day position as definitely less favorable. The figures in the assessments of respondents about their situation in the 1980s, the years of socialism, are literally baffling at first view in their Utopianism: the time of the early 1980s is seen by the larger part of the respondents as a golden age of material well-being for their family and themselves. According to them, most were in the conceivable middle or above middle (which exactly corresponds to J. Kelley’s Figure E). Here are the Bulgarian and Russian variants:

\textbf{Figure 2. Memory of social status for early 80’s in Bulgaria and Russia – the same utopian “golden age” of material well-being…}

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{c|c|c}
\hline
\textbf{Bulgaria} & & \textbf{Russia} \\
\hline
1.7 & 1.7 & 1.1 \\
2.2 & 5.2 & 11.8 \\
5.9 & 16.3 & 32.4 \\
9.4 & 27.2 & 26.8 \\
19.7 & 5.5 & 1.6 \\
25.1 & 5.9 & 11.8 \\
27.2 & 13.8 & 1.6 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Memory of social status for early 80’s in Bulgaria and Russia – the same utopian “golden age” of material well-being…}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{20} Kelley’s pictorial approach to class was used in several modules of ISSP and ISEA programs.
Even looking back at the early 1990s, at the very start of the transition, most Bulgarians and Russians see their position at that time in a rather rosy light, and place themselves in the middle range (Figure D according to Kelley, depicting an ideal egalitarian subjective image of the “middle class society”):

Obviously, the embellishment of the past two periods is due to their distance in time and to the comparison with the raw realities of the present day, which in the collective view of respondents can be nothing but strictly pyramidal in structure, with a very narrow layer at the top and increasingly more people from the middle downwards; i.e. the self-identification of respondents is at increasingly lower levels of social position (corresponding precisely to Kelley’s Figure B):

This is a surprisingly categorical, as if meant for a textbook, example of transformation of subjective social inequality in the lagging countries in transition, Bulgaria and Russia, a transformation of the imagined dynamics of one’s personal presence in social stratification in the last twenty years, from the view that most were in the middle or top of society, through the view that most were in middle positions, to the view that the majority is beneath the conceived middle and mostly at the social bottom. This is an apt illustration of the categorical inversion in mass consciousness of the subjective social world as seen through the eyes, assessments and thinking of our contemporaries in these two countries.

Figure 3. The poor reality in 2000 in Bulgaria and Russia – the pyramidal in shape stratification body

![Chart showing stratification body](image)

Evidently, the figures in Russia and Bulgaria are quite similar in type and are identical in terms of the three temporal reference points (the figures in Rumania are analogous); they show a great similarity in the way of valuating the present and the past.

* * *
On the other side, with highest positive appraisals of the present day, are precisely the countries in the lead of post-communist transition; this is explainable most generally by the noted advance in economic reforms and especially the rise in living standard of the population. Three things are characteristic for them:

there seems to be no memory of an Utopian past; the respondents in these advanced countries see many advantages in their former status (which in turn is a great resource for building today’s society);

second, the image of the respondent's past social status, for the 80s and 90s, is not essentially different from his/her assessment of the present status, i.e. the interviewees do not feel there is any particular difference or great movement between their position then and now\(^\text{21}\).

thirdly, the figure of their present-day social stratification based on their self-assessment, is far from pyramidal in shape; it is similar to that of the previous two moments and has the typical form of the stratification of a “middle class society”.

Figure 4. The same ‘middle class’ society and class convergence of Slovenia and East Germany – even in 2000

To put it briefly, the figures show a clear differentiation between subjective stratification in the different countries according to the progress made in post-communist transition.

However, comments cannot present a more thorough picture of the assessments as to personal status and as to the changes in the respective countries. One more step is necessary: we should look into the internal social-group differentiation underlying the prevalent estimations in separate countries. Otherwise, the information on the differences would be averaged out, approximate, and hence

\(^{21}\) This is connected to another issue, commented by Domanski: there are no available data on the great changes and mobility in social-structural terms in the post-communist countries, despite the frequent statements in the media and propaganda (Domanski 2000).
Inaccurate. It would be like registering only the mean income in countries without examining the incomes of the basic classes and strata of society, and trying thereby to understand how people live, what their style and way of life is.

In this case we will use data only from the separate countries, and, in addition, apply the shortest, 3-component version of the classification of social strata, as deduced above. Of course, given its limitations, this variant can only represent general trends. Data analysis confirms categorically and clearly a number of the conclusions in our discussion.

In this differentiation of the pictures of social stratification, there is a clearly noticeable difference between types of figures in the lagging countries (Bulgaria, Rumania, Russia) as compared with the outpacing countries (such as Slovenia and East Germany).

In the excelling ones the figures of a “society of the middle class” predominate, i.e. respondents mostly identify their social position at the middle levels of the social-structure hierarchy; this is true for all three status categories and for all three points in time (the 80s, the 90s and 2000). We see a great proximity in the types of self-assessment of status with regard to the past and the present.

Figure 5. Transformations in status body of professionals in East Germany – almost no changes

In the lagging countries, the figures of the stratified social body are essentially different: the socialist period (the early 1980s) is most often imagined by all three status categories in a Utopian light (most of them believe that was the time when they and their families held positions situated mostly in the social middle and top); concerning the period of beginning of changes (the early 90s), the Utopian perception decreases but is still present, especially among Bulgarian and Rumanian low-status categories; in views about the present stratification (2000) coming from middle and low-status categories in Bulgaria, Rumania and Russia, the pyramidal shape emerges: most of these respondents assign themselves to the lower, below middle, levels of the social hierarchy. The lower levels of this pyramid are
particularly wide according to the indications of Russian and Bulgarian low-status respondents.

There is a notable difference between the stratification figures for people of different social status. Even when they are respondents from lagging countries, the high-status groups (most of all the professionals) indicate a substantially different self-identification in the present social structure of their societies, but also a different, realistic assessment of their own position in the two previous time periods. Bulgarian and Rumanian professionals produce a stratification picture closer to that of Slovenian and East German professionals than to that of the intermediate and low-status categories in their own countries. Evidently, it would be a mistake to limit our examination to the average assessment for these two countries, which is pyramidal in shape.

Figure 6. Transformations in status body of “intermediates” in Romania – turns upside down

An important regularity is deduced through this approach. Among high-status categories there is a significant similarity: Professionals in the outpacing and the lagging countries have rather similar self-assessments about their and their family’s social position. This indicates their great potential for supporting and assisting the post-communist economic and political reforms. Conversely, the low-status categories among the outpacing and lagging countries are quite different in their assessment of their personal place in the hierarchy of the social structure. The intermediate status categories are in an intermediate, transitional condition. In other words, the difference between the two types of countries is rather in their low-status, in the type of self-identification of the latter and, naturally, in their differing actual social position.

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The stratification figure traced by Russian professionals (especially the intelligentsia) is closer to pyramidal in shape, which is probably due to the prevalence in their assessment of people assigning themselves to lower social positions.
In other words, the two types of countries resemble each other in their high-status groups and differ in their low-status groups. Of course, the similarity of the professionals in the two types is not absolute: a measure of differences is registered, which we have discussed at length. Here is an illustration of the small difference between professionals of the different post-communist countries, expressed through the average assessment of the position of their household today:

**Figure 7. Almost “On the Verge of Convergence” – professionals in Bulgaria and Slovenia in 2000**

The Bulgarian, Russian, and Rumanian professionals indicate in highest percentages that the situation of their families and households is at worst levels (particularly the Bulgarians, whose mean value is only 3.07); the assessment of the outpacers in transition, Czechs, Slovenians and East Germans (particularly the Czechs, with a mean value of 4.67) are of a qualitatively different kind. We see here that convergence tendencies go hand in hand with divergence.

**References**


