

Guest editor's opening remarks

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Problems of Contemporary Society in the Face of Global Challenges and Changes

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Вступительное сообщение приглашенного редактора

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Проблемы современного общества перед лицом глобальных вызовов и перемен

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Ours is a time of enormous progress being made in many spheres of the life of society and people, but it is also an age of vast challenges, for the effects of progress are not always positive. Very often, the advances made by society confront it with tough, at times seemingly unsolvable, contradictions and problems. This issue of the journal *Research Result. Sociology and Management* is devoted precisely to the problems that contemporary global challenges bring to societies. Uniting the efforts of authors from Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Serbia, the collection seeks responses to global challenges in the perspective of the specificities of social development in these countries and the urgent issues they face and have to resolve; this feature determines the great thematic variety of the collection. With regard to scientific methodology, the present issue of the journal offers a very interesting example of successful combination of theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of the global challenges of today; here, the applied empirical approaches include a variety of sociological methods (quantitative, qualitative, and related to media content analysis) as well as ethnographic techniques.

Mobility, and the ensuing migration of large groups of people is considered to be a

basic characteristic of the modern age; this feature of our times is understandably touched upon in one way or another in some of the articles, and is specifically the topic of **The Refugee Challenge: State Policy and Social Attitudes in Bulgaria** by Albena Nakova (Bulgaria) and **Initial Impact of COVID-19 on the Professional Trajectories of Highly Qualified Bulgarians** by Vanya Ivanova (Bulgaria).

In the first of these, the author Albena Nakova examines one of the greatest challenges of our times: the migration of large masses of people fleeing wars, political persecution and terrorism. These refugees who have become one of the most serious challenges to European countries and governments in the last decade. Specifically, the article analyzes the contemporary national policy of Bulgaria with regard to asylum and refugees. The analysis is based on the results of a national representative survey of the Bulgarian population, conducted in 2020, which has shown the integration of refugees into Bulgarian society to be an area of intersection between purposeful state policies and social attitudes determining the possibility for a successful implementation of those policies and impacting on the nature and specific features

of the refugees' integration into Bulgarian society.

In the second article devoted to the topic, **Initial Impact of COVID-19 on the Professional Trajectories of Highly Qualified Bulgarians**, Vanya Ivanova studies the problems of labor migrants and the visible reverse migration trends resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the article explores the impact of the pandemic on the professional trajectories of highly qualified mobile Bulgarians living in different countries in the European Union and beyond. Again based on empirical research, this virtual ethnographic study explores whether the pandemic of COVID-19 is provoking further movements in the professional trajectories of the respondents and their potential intentions to return to their country of origin considering the changes in the daily routine and possible interruptions of their professional realization and developments.

The problems of migration are touched upon in yet another article by a Bulgarian author, **Monitoring of the New Identities (Salafi And Sunni) in Islam and the Role of Social Conflicts** by Bogdana Todorova. Here, the questions of migration interweave with another major challenge of the contemporary world: Islamic radicalism and extremism. In this case, the issue of migration is viewed through the prism of the formation of the "new Salafi and Sunni identities" among the second/third-generation of Muslim immigrants, a trend resulting from the coexistence of modernization-directed and traditional attitudes. The aim and contribution of the article is to justify the need to monitor the formation of "new identities" in Islam, a trend viewed as a precondition for radicalization and extremism; in support of governmental institutions and policies, the author seeks to develop methodological tools for the analysis and prevention of Islamic radicalism and extremism.

In the context of growing mobility, the problems of identity and self-determination are no less a challenge of the modern age. The article by Russian authors Inna Shapovalova, Irina Zavodyan and Irina Valieva **Youth of**

the Russian Borderlands: the Problem of Ethnic Identity and Tolerance analyzes the problems of identity and tolerance in the context of a study on the young generation viewed as a strategically important part of the national human capital. The scientific contribution of the article consists in its deriving the factors, indicators and dispositions relevant to ethnic identity and tolerance among young people in the Russian border region. This analysis is based on quantitative research results showing that, as concerns ethnic identification, the factors of cultural integration and linguistic involvement are primary compared with hereditary factors. Based on the research, the authors introduce the new concept of "delayed ethnic self-identification". The practical value of the article lies in its demonstrating the discrepancy between the conducted youth policies and the actual values, attitudes and interests of young people.

Poverty, another great contemporary challenge, is in the focus of the Russian authors Natalya Prokazina and Tatyana Galaeva in their article **Poverty as an Object of Sociological Analysis: Theoretical Approaches and Empirical Measurements**. Based on a theoretical analysis of the phenomenon of poverty and empirical data from the authors' quantitative and qualitative research, the article presents the regional perception of poverty among various strata of the population, the main characteristics of the poor, and the regional specificity of poverty.

Yet another important challenge in our times – digitalization of education and the expanding presence of digital education in training and teaching – is the topic of the article **Challenges to Digital Education in a Situation of Social Crisis** by Valentina Milenkova (Bulgaria). Examining the state of mobile learning in Bulgaria, the author presents the policy framework in which the education processes take place, and describes the various platforms and software products on which mobile learning is based. Here, the problem of digitalization is linked to the major current challenge presented by the

COVID-19 pandemic, a development that even more distinctly shows the urgent need for enhancing the digitalization of education. Using qualitative empirical methods, the author analyzes the pandemic situation and how, under its influence, the Bulgarian education system is being restructured towards mobile learning.

Another global challenge to the contemporary world, and specifically to developed countries, is population ageing and the need for the state to take concrete measures to help elderly people lead an active life, making possible their active inclusion in society. These important social problems are the topic of the article **Entrepreneurial Activity of the Third Age in Russia** by Iulia Pinkovetskaia. This Russian author's article raises the question that the growing number of people in pre-retirement and retirement age, a typical trend for Russia, requires solving the problem of their employment, including through the development of entrepreneurship in this population group. The author analyzes the features of the activity of third-age entrepreneurs, the dynamics of the number of early-age entrepreneurs in Russia and the prospects for the development of third-age entrepreneurship. Based on the results of empirical research, the author substantiates that not all elderly people can be entrepreneurs as not all have the appropriate abilities and intentions or are ready to create their own businesses. At the same time, people of this age category in Russia undoubtedly have a significant potential that needs to be properly used. State assistance and support for third-age business entities can be one way to solve the problems of population ageing. In becoming entrepreneurs, third-age people remain active, solve many personal problems, increase the employment rate and contribute to the economic growth of the regions.

Against the backdrop of the growing number of people in developed countries who want to cohabit without being officially married, the Russian authors Tamara Rostovskaya, Oksana Kuchmaeva and Olga Zolotareva, in their article **Motives for Mar-**

riage: Analysis through the Prism of Gender, address the multi-faceted and complex problem of making a comprehensive assessment of the motives that encourage the creation of a family union. Drawing upon data from a nation-wide sociological study in Russia, the authors analyze the opinions of men and women on motives for marriage. The practical significance of the study lies in the information it provides regarding the current transformations of the Russian value system that affect marital behavior, trends that should be taken into account when developing management decisions relevant to socio-demographic development.

Ecological problems, certainly one of the most important global challenges of our time, are the focus of Russian author Yulia Ermolaeva's article **Transformation of Social and Environmental Practices of waste management in the mentality of Russian citizens**. Based on interviews with citizens, this study examines the perception of waste as an environmental practice, and studies separate waste collection and the motivation for it as the main environmental practice accessible to citizens. The article shows that Russians have a high level of knowledge about the waste problem, which, however, does not lead to persistent motivation for pro-ecological action. Based on this, the author argues the importance of introducing a convenient infrastructure for separate waste collection and strengthening the economic and social motivation for it.

The article by Valentina Marinescu (Romania), **Divergent Perspectives about Social Problems in Romania. A Longitudinal Literature Review**, analyzes a particularly important problem for the social sciences and science in general: to what extent can science identify and help solve fundamental social problems. To address the question, the author focuses on the main documented trends in the scientific analysis of the modes of Romanian media presentations of the internal social aspects; in particular, the author examines the media representation of disadvantaged social groups. The main gen-

eral conceptual framework applied to this task is “framing theory”.

A continuation of the topic of science serving to resolve important social problems is offered by Serbian authors Slobodan Neskovic and Anastazija Tanja Đelić in their article **Social Challenges and European Integration of the Western Balkans Countries**. According to the authors, the sub-region of the Western Balkans, which includes Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Northern Macedonia, is of special interest to all researchers of social phenomena due to the here continuously displayed challenges, risks and threats to security, which underlie the region’s reputation as the “powder keg” of Europe. The special topic of analysis here is the EU integration of countries in this region, which has reached different stages according to their individual specificities of economic development, political system and security issues.

Unquestionably, contemporary global challenges are numerous and multifaceted. Identifying and seeking adequate solutions for

them is a matter both of national state policies and of coordinated international policies, and also a question of the attitudes of local populations and their willingness to be proactive and directly take part in seeking solutions and applying these solutions in practice. In this issue of *Research Result. Sociology and Management*, we have attempted to present part of the global challenges to contemporary society. Obviously, the presentation is not, and cannot be, comprehensive. Yet we hope we have succeeded in conveying a partial picture of today’s multifarious world, and in provoking your attention. I hope you enjoy our publication!

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