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Youth, Protection and Education Today: Perceived Vulnerabilities, Statistical Issues, Perspectives

Gheorghita NISTOR¹, Roxana UREA², Ioan NEACSU³

Abstract

The Romanian reality shows a specific dynamic regarding the young generation's vulnerabilities and their implications, and many experts have carried out differential studies in this area. Based on these researches and on the theoretical framework of social policies, we did a research study aiming to reveal the young generation's social perception regarding social policies and the level of personal implication in dealing with the young generation's problems. We also had in mind some specific operational objectives and a certain assumption when we selected the subjects for our research (460 subjects, 350 teenage pupils in 6 high schools of Bucharest and 110 students of the Bucharest University). We used the following investigation methods: The IN-GN '2011 Questionnaire, Focus Group-3 and the SWOT analysis, the Internal Factor Assessment Matrix, the External Factor Assessment Matrix, the competitive profile Matrix, Document analyses/social reports from different agencies and authorities. The results reveal a complex panel of social perceptions of the young generation regarding the social policy and its involvement in solving out the problems they are facing.

Keywords: social policies; poverty; social involvement; social project; social perception; motivation.

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Warning of intention

The pressure of the realities of the last years is resented both at global and at sector levels, as affecting the institutions and components of the social realm and equally all the ages of the social actors (Landren, 2005). The attempts at sketching their coordinates go beyond the values of the mental exercise, most often invoking the power, the social-economic and educational determinations. This study approaches this penetration into the basic or derived processes connected with the wish to analyze the dissolutions alerting the agendas of involved institutions and of the acting stakeholders. There is a real spiral of criticisms and much less that of a motion in view of social solidarity doubled by an association with a real communitary awareness of the legal, administrative, sociological, psychological solutions or of those with a social or educational economy character. To note are also the significances derived from the movement for the guaranteeing and defending of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the categories of citizens we are referring to (Geiringer & Palmer, 2003). The analyses are focused on the context analysis, on the exploratory exercise as far as the perception of the values and facts of the social domain are concerned, on the validation of the borders of responsibilities, and essentially upon the ground of observing the principle of the young social actor's welfare (Neacșu, 2010).

The critical examination of the social policies for young people

The concept of social policy under the conditions of the contextual analysis perceived as a usable one and open to evaluation aims at a wide area of domains and activities, representing "the intervention of the state in configuring the social processes specific to a collectivity, with a view to modifying them towards a direction considered to be desirable by the political actors" (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1995: 22). The major objectives specific to modern social policies are defined and better understood by articulating at least three directions (Neacșu, 2011: 11): (1) *promoting certain public goods-values* – defense, security, life infrastructure, health, education, culture, science; (2) *social protection/security of the social segments under difficulty*, by means of social insurance, social protection and assistance; (3) *social development, by ensuring social conditions* considered to be important for the collectivity - culture, education, family, care for children and for the elderly, social solidarity, international collaboration, human responsibility.

The structure of our analysis gravitates around two nuclei of value: the *individual* and, especially, the *family welfare* (ensuring goods and services necessary for a normal way of living) and *the quality of a dignified life standards* (aspirations, expectations modelled both internally and externally). The both are correlated to the mechanisms/criteria of implementation, especially to those meant for:

the optimal mobilization and allotting of resources, the efficient administration of the participative motivations by, and for work, for performance, by means of cooperation and competition on the work market; the distribution of resources in accordance with certain desirable and socially accepted principles (Amiot, Terry & Callan, 2007).

The young people of Romania's in the 2010-2020 decade are characterized by the presence of much more pragmatic values, with everything against the background of expecting the promotion of a policy of stimulation, of protection and social assistance. We can exemplify by some of the orientations and functional measures in the Ministry of Education programs for the 2000-2012 period, such as: material facilities for the child and/or their family (allowances, gratuities); free education and support for school participation (scholarships, free course books, certain school stationery.); free health support; social protection for the children with special needs/social requirements or other forms of protection. A special position in the logic of implementing the social policies practised within vulnerable social-economic contexts is occupied by the sphere of education, with certain orientations along the line of reducing social disparities and vulnerabilities, but much less for the youth in disfavoured rural zones (Neacșu, 2002). Here are some of the most frequently ones associated with: inequalities manifested in education and revealed by blocking the opportunities of being formed and asserting oneself by the school, with effects in the plan of social losses, of underutilizing the human resources, of the moral and economic marginalization: (1) inequalities of access to the school resources, due to the family they come from (low income, poor education), to belonging to a vulnerable social-professional category, precarious life styles etc.; (2) inequalities among school institutions (budgets, resources, pedagogical climate, qualifications of the teachers, logistic endowment, politics influenced management and so on); (3) inequalities at the level of the material basis and that of a poor penetration of the new technologies, with many of them remaining anachronical, due to isolation or merging of schools, most often irrationally decided (Neacșu, 2011: 12). Hence, the current constraints in the educational social milieu or in terms of protection, such as: governmental, institutional, curricular regulations, those in forming the teachers, in management, in the associative-parental forms, the communitary, administrative ones, the free time spending, nonformal education and so on (Reimers, 2000).

Derived *consequences* of these constraints and of poverty can be found in various behaviour aspects, such as: absenteeism, school abandon; reduction of the prosocial and personal motivation, despite the asserted needs to participate in changes (Warneken *et al.*, 2009: 458); reducing the state of optimism in the struggle with adversities, reducing of the competences of thinking on the long term, of anticipation, of having a good positive vision; encouraging the manifestations of selfishness, social stress, the reduction of the conduct of assuming risks, the poor power of determination and self determination, of entrepreneurial conduct etc. (Bottero, 2012).

We can also identify other arguments able to generate both serious reflections and significant interventions: (1) If we accept that the youth represents the future human resource, even that “of tomorrow”, and education stands for the key drive of sustainable development, of the social inclusion for this category of population, then poverty, that touches in a fundamental manner the children and the youth for a nonjustified socially time or by political decisions, does not interrupt the cycle of transmission towards the next generation (Bernal, 2008). Between school, education and the poverty/impooverishment specific to the young generation there is a circular relationship, with them having a status of both causes and effects at the same time. If there is a low education level, one does not get to have a profession that can ensure a decent living income. At its best, access is done to jobs for which unskilled hard work, low income and higher risks or insecurity are specific. Reversely, a poor family cannot ensure the children’s access to school, it cannot ensure a normal life with decent living conditions and nourishment corresponding to the age of growth. Thus, the opportunities of finding a better paid job get lower by being excluded from education (Rodríguez-Sedano, Costa-Paris, & Aguilera, 2012). The children who become adults will follow the same circular route like their own parents in a poor family. We are dealing with what the specialists call “*a culture of poverty*”, to be found in certain communities, with certain segments of the population. The main vulnerable groups that are prey to poverty are the children, the young people, the monoparental families or those with many children. Exclusion from education means poverty not only for the parents but also for the children, the adults of tomorrow. Poverty, with its personal, social, political, legal, governing implications and others, has its origin and starts from the *people’s needs and aspirations, the zones where they live, the time* we are referring to. There is a range of researches on *incomes and expenditures* as sources of poverty, and examples are known that refer to the poverty in the urban or rural environments or the poverty of the American person that can be the richness of the Indian one etc. (Nistor, 2011: 21-22); (2) Another aspect refers to the *perception by the individual* of one’s own poverty and we refer to subjective poverty. Some specialists (Preda, 2002:710) maintain that “poverty, as well as beauty, resides in the eyes of the owner”. Whatever is unanimously accepted by all the specialists is the fact that poverty is conducive to the impossibility of satisfying our fundamental needs, the basic ones, such as food, shelter, participation in the social and cultural life . A full definition of poverty should include also the social life, as it is known that the human being is a complex bio-psycho-socio-cultural entity. The European Community Council of Ministers, 1975 (Preda, 2002:711) defined the people in poverty as being those “individuals or families whose resources are so small that they exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the member state in which they live”; (3) Poverty determines certain relevant and significant changes for the life of the subject in satisfying his or his family’s needs, viz. food behaviour, and in particular that of the child. The family

is the first life environment of the child and it has considerable influence upon their physical and psychical development. The family no longer affords to put in the daily basket the optimal quantity of food, which is conducive to a range of drawbacks in the physical development of the child. In comparison with the adult, the child has a series of needs specific to the age, connected with their growth and education, which demand to be satisfied (Parr, 2009); (4) The current social-economic context affects the whole population and especially the young generation, that of the children, teenagers and young people. We frequently hear around us about this crisis affecting all the domains of the social-economic life. But how can we define the crisis and how does it affect the individual's everyday life? (Zaal *et al.*, 2012).

Crisis comes from the Greek *Krisis* which means *decision*, determination. "Crises can affect any domain: from the social corpus to economy, politics, morale, psychology, physiology etc. Wherever it may be manifested, the crisis creates a break in whatever used to seem normal, usual, by then. ... Any crisis is spontaneous, unforeseen and it touches the envisaged entity in depth and in its assembly, to such an extent that the thus produced transformations raise a question mark over the identity of a structure, be it individual or social" (Barus-Michel & Neculau 2011: 35). From the perspective of psycho-sociologists, the crisis can be conducive to negative phenomena, an instability affecting the social systems over longer periods of time, such as armed conflicts, revolts, with the instauration of uncontrollable disorder and generating the crisis of the family, the crisis of jobs, bankruptcies, pathological troubles (depressions, suicidal behaviour). (Thus, a *pyramid of social fears* is presented, fears that affect all the generations, are destabilizing for the individual and also for the social equilibrium (Nistor, 2011). Starting from A. Maslow's famous pyramid of human needs with five and 7 levels, respectively, that observes the principles of the hierarchy of needs from the basic, physiological ones, to the authentically human ones, in the same manner we can describe a pyramid of social fears. According to this principle, the needs pass from a manifest phase into a latent one, "... once satisfied, a want is no longer a want. The organism is dominated and its behaviour is organized only by unsatisfied needs. ... primary needs are placed in a quite clear hierarchy, on the basis of the degree of domination of each" (Maslow, 2007: 86; 150). In 1995, the French psychiatrists Cristophe Andre and Patrick Legeron proposed a *pyramid of anxieties*, they hierarchized them having at its basis 1. *the fear of failure*, 2. *the fear to reveal oneself*, 3. *the fear to impose oneself*, 4. *the fear of being observed*. Always the fear at superior levels implies the fears at bottom levels, the same actually as in Maslow's pyramid. In the pyramid of fears, this fact is no longer observed, the inferior levels do not condition the superior ones (Chelcea, 2011: 290-291). This new pyramid is based on fears connected with the human existence, the loss of life, of freedom and security, and the top is reserved to the future and

to the uncertainty connected with it, to insecurity. Thus, the pyramid of social fears envisages: 1. *loss of life*, 2. *loss of freedom*, 3. *loss of domicile* (deportations, evictions), 4. *loss of fortune*, 5. *loss of the job*, 6. *loss of privileges* (from managerial positions, demotion), 7. *loss of the future of the successors, of the life or domicile of the close ones* (Nistor & Anghel, 2012).

In Romania a series of investigative actions was taken as to the fears experienced by the population in the communist period (1965-1989) and in the post-communist one (1989-2009). Thus, in 2009 CURS investigated a sample of 1,039 persons aged 38 plus as regards the social fears or concerns they had lived in the two periods. The results were significantly different: for the first period – a pyramid of social fears resulted in the shape of an “urn”, i.e. a wide basis that is extending itself, then there are more restricted levels and the top is wide again (Brateş, 2011).

For the second period envisaged, the pyramid is reversed, with a small basis and a wider top. If in the communist period social fears had an obvious vital character, with the fear for death and of being deprived of freedom (see Research report, Abraham, D. 2009, “Romania in 2009 in comparison with Romania in 1989” in Chelcea, 2011: 295), in the current period, the future and its uncertainty affect the individuals’ lives. One can note that the most pregnant fear in the current period is that connected with the loss of the job, followed by the fears as to the future, and as regards *the next generations* (Figure 1).

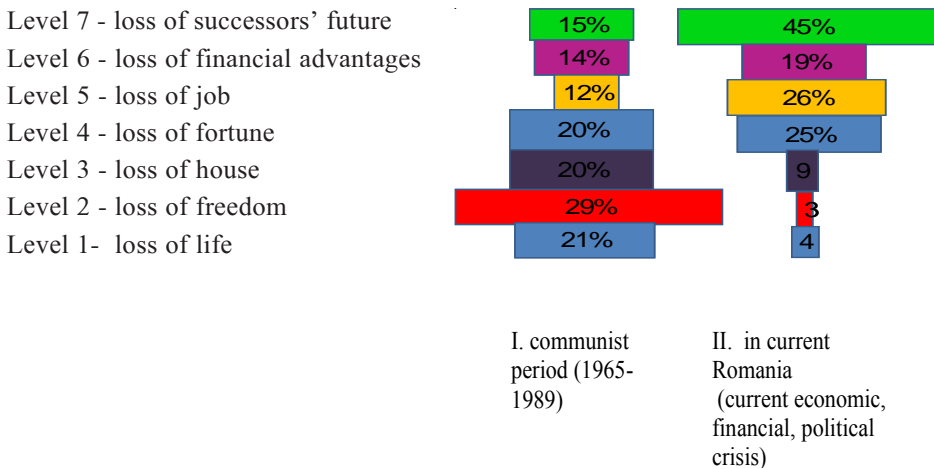


Figure 1. Pyramid of social fears – graphic representation for the communist period and the current one (source: CURS survey, Coord. Abraham, 2009, in Chelcea, 2011: 295-296).

Answers to two legitimate questions

To the question “*what is happening with the young people under the conditions of poor milieus, whatever type they may be?*” we retain as important the following aspects/characteristics of the relation work and life (1) young people learn, work and live their own family’s economic and social day by day life in a hard manner (Mayer, 2004); (2) the explosion of their dissatisfaction, individual or as a group is associated to the implosion of the needs; (3) the brutal extension of the social in their life amplifies the motivation for leaving, demotivation as to performance, it reduces the spectrum of positive relationships within social groups (Denissen & Penke, 2008); (4) separation and marginalization by unemployment are conducive to the disintegration of the families, groups of reference, to breaking the coherence of symbols, of the quality of life (5) poverty affects the fundamental values of solidarity, happiness and life of the youth in their own family; (6) children from families having a “minority” status ethnically or as regards poverty are more affected by separation, poor education, non observance of rights; (7) the administration suffers from narrow politicianism, the conceptions as to consumerism, commercialism without real ethics of values. The natural question that follows is: *what characteristics does, in synthesis, the present context have?* The answer aims at realities and causes that are most frequently non virtual. This is due to the fact that, without any exaggeration, the factorial causal context is complex, and the synthetic list below being a resultative one. We are really facing the reality of transition and the avatars of the extended crisis (Lin, 2001). All these are undeniable arguments, useful in our analysis and usable in understanding the interpretations we are going to make, thus reducing from authors’ hypothetical subjectiveness.

As mentioned, we are synthetically presenting some of the frequent major causes invoked or known: (1) Exceedingly big supply of highly qualified human resources/lack of critical valorisation; (2) Limited material and financial associated to a poor attraction of EU funds; (3) Globalization and antiglobalization, concepts and scenarios under reexamination; (4) Organizations that do not learn, nonperformant managerial, organizational and ethical models; (5) Increase of needs and expectations of the youth, of qualified adults, in mobility on the job market abroad; (6) Reducing of positive motivations, uncertainty, insecurity, occupational stress; (7) Competitive milieu, without social protection and safety regulations; (7) The Social becoming very vulnerable; (8) Economy in regress, with relevant indicators in this respect; (9) Banks closing, small towns becoming monoindustrial; (10) Agriculture confirms unpredictable risks, unequal rural demographic concentrations; (11) The public sector is oversized; (12) Exclusion of youth from having their own houses, reduction of participation in qualitative education, poor health standards, lack of decisional involvement; (13) Reducing communitary welfare (Hartley, Zakriski & Wright, 2011).

Focuses of the empirical research design

The general objective envisaged in the research was aimed at getting the youth perception as to the support social policies in a crisis period, the vision by which they relate themselves to the future and the gradient of involvement in solving out the problems they are facing as the young generation.

Centres of investigative interest/ specific and priority objectives:

- O1. Factors influencing the existence, conduct and attitudes of the youth as to their existential benchmarks.
- O2. Value, quality, efficiency of the actions, measures, interventions.
- O3. Motivating factors for the participation in the social life and in decision making.
- O4. Perception of social vulnerabilities in the residence area.
- O5. Projection of the future-expectations of personal fulfilment.
- O6. Correlation of psychological states experienced and the desire of involvement in solving the problems.
- O7. Estimation of the perception of the living standard and of the credibility of the sources/media of information as to the stage of the living standards within which we currently are.

The basic hypothesis from which we started in our scientific investigation was if, and to what extent, the young generation of teenage pupils and students is concerned to make judgements of stating and evaluating certain values of the social component, to adequately project, according to the age and experience, alternatives for the personal development project, but also the social one of life, as well as the motivational force with which they can get involved in solving up some of the problems they are facing as social actors, as an open community to new experiences and learning.

Main indicators. We should firstly clarify one point: this analysis requires a good psychosociological understanding as to what an *indicator* is, what *values* it expresses, what *quality criteria* are applied in assessing its values and under *what conditions* it is validated. We also mention that in this analysis we will proceed to succinct explanations, accompanied by certain elaborations on these elements, accepting the influence of social cognition and of lecture-connected competence of the readers of the literature in the field.

The dimensions and indicators on the basis of which we have built up the sociological investigation instrument aimed at:

- *Factors influencing the existence*, conduct and daily attitudinal reactions of the youth. We made an inventory of a series of indicators here as to the economic performances, the youth departure abroad, the reduction of the impact of school over the graduates, the breaching of ethical values in the professional life or in the social competition (contests, examinations) without the observance of the professional deontology criteria. As to the support social policies for the crisis period we tried to get the opinion of the youth as regards the *consensual social strategies* as to the stimulation and/or protection of certain vulnerable groups such as the young people, the elderly, the unemployed, the children with special needs (CSN) or those of overgifted performant ones. In this respect we wanted to see also how inter-institutional cooperation is perceived in matters of introducing and maintaining of certain precise interventions, proactive for the youth (Urea, 2010).
- Another envisaged dimension was focused on the *value, quality, efficiency of the actions, measures, interventions* of the institutions in charge. The indicators we referred to were: the protection of the vulnerable, education and school of quality, health services (medical care, drugs), security of the individual (in the street, at the stadium, leisure places), communication (by telephone, mail, press, TV, radio), services provided by the local administration and community services (housing, transport, water, alimentation, hygiene) and, not least, professional services of vocational counselling, unemployment and the offers for spending the free time (sports, theatre, music, cinema).
- The third dimension refers to the *motivating factors for the participation in the social and institutional life*, to some decisions by the analysis of the following indicators: the quality of the projects connected with the personal life, the safety of a permanent job, the opportunity to carry out a qualitative work and which is advantageous from the material point of view, the possibility to obtain a higher income for oneself and for the family, being able to promote and reach success in one's career, the possibility to communicate, to get on well with the colleagues of the same age, to be appreciated as a value, to participate in the important decisions of the institutions, to have a dignified life (Dirks, Treat & Weersing, 2007).
- Another dimension referred to *the appreciation of the values* and of the *degree of involvement of the youth in actions affecting their future*. We tried to measure this dimension by certain indicators: concern for one's own life and for the life of the others, preparation for getting adapted to new critical situations and to get involved in the improvement and/or changing of the living conditions, the desire to participate in volunteer social actions meant to protect the life of children, youth, elderly people, the satisfaction as to what they have achieved, to what extent they consider that they cannot

change anything and that this would be a waste of time, that they live states of disappointment as to the actions of some of those belonging to their own generation.

- *Perception of social vulnerabilities* in the zone of residence was the next dimension analyzed by noting certain disfunctions, irregular aspects, the examples being relevant: it is a poor zone, without any demographic, economic and cultural future or an agricultural one, without any horizon; non performant school, of poor quality; inadequate medical services, settlement/zone that is not taken care of and it is monoindustrial, with a deficient infrastructure (impracticable ways, transport against high taxes); inhabitants who are not interested in the social life, but mainly in the strictly personal or family one (Urea, 2011).
- The next dimension referred to the *projection of the future – expectations in the personal fulfilment*, analyzed by the expression of opinions as to the evolution of the situation by the actions that will be carried out in the next three years, such as: change of domicile or of school (in the country or abroad), of the job, or trying to change things progressively, to maintain the current status quo, to reflect on the opportunities of development by setting up a small business.
- Another envisaged aspect was the relationship between the psychological states experienced and the desire of involvement in solving up the problems the children and even the youth of today are facing in Romania. Here the following were mentioned: lack of participation in quality education, *school and family abandon (early drop out)*, unjustified placing of the child in institutions/services for protection, drug or ethnobotanic plants consumption, illicit work/economic exploitation at small ages, traffic of children, juvenile delinquency, street children, social exclusion of the child with disabilities, breaching the child's fundamental rights, begging, beating, abuse, violence against the child, educational polarization, urban – rural discrimination, of gender, of family social status, precarious health care, absence of child and vulnerability family protection, etc. (Parr,2009).
- Another dimension on the basis of which we built the working instrument aimed at *the perception of estimating the evolution of the living standard* (welfare, poverty rate, levels of personal income, that of the family) for the last three years and of the *credibility of the sources* of information as to the *current level of the living standard*.

The most frequently used *measurement scale* for the subjects' opinions was that of Likert with five steps/intervals. The instructions will refer to such a manner of filling in of the items.

Methods used: Survey by questionnaire; Focus group – 3; SWOT context analysis; Matrix of evaluating the internal factors-MEFI; Matrix of evaluating the external factors – MEFÉ; Matrix of the competitive profile-MPC; Analysis of the public documents/reports with significant social impact.

The *Sample* that was studied had the following structure: pupils in 6 high schools in Bucharest, students of the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences and of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance of the Bucharest University. The high schools were selected according to the following criteria: a) each high school has 200 registered pupils/series on average; b) each high school has a minimal level of promovability at the baccalaureate by its graduates for the last two years, preceding our research. The statistical data have the following distribution (see *fig. nos. 2.a. and 2.b.*). The research was carried out in 2011, on a sample of 460 subjects, out of which 276 girls – 60% and 184 boys – 40%. The age criterion shows us the following statistical distribution 350 teenagers - 76% and 110 students - 24%.

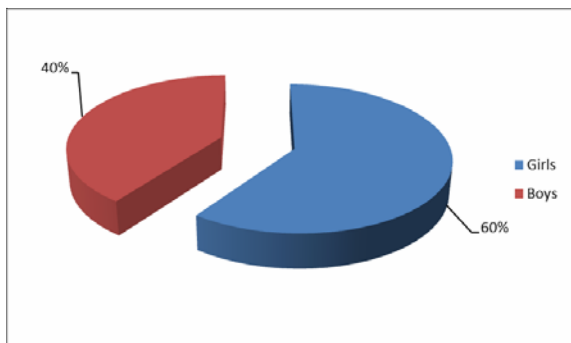


Figure 2a. *Sample structure by gender*

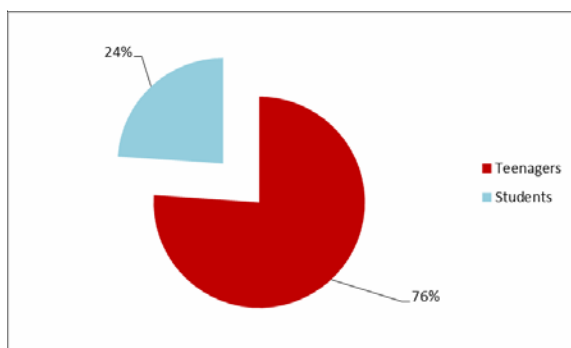


Figure 2b. *Sample structure by age*

Results, interpretations, comments

After processing the main answers of the investigated responders, with the IBM-SPSS 20 programme, we present both the significant iconic elements, and short associated interpretations.

Firstly, we present the distribution of the answers regarding the factors which influence the behaviour and attitudes of pupils and young students (*Table 2*).

Table 2. The value of the factors which influence behaviour and attitudinal reactions of pupils and youth.

Nr. crt	Generative factors of behaviour and attitudes	Global average	Average-group of teenagers	Average-group of students
1.	lack of social and consensual strategies regarding the orientation towards stimulating and/ or protecting the young generation	3.51	2.84	4.11
2.	diminution of school's impact on the evolution of the graduates	3.48	3.02	3.77
3.	great emphasis on declarations, speeches, broken promises, induction of false motivational behaviour	3.48	3.96	3.11
4.	lack of political cooperation and cooperation between institutions in order to support certain interventions for youth: reactive, precise	3.30	3.08	3.55
5.	Leaving abroad of pupils, students, young graduates	3.26	2.71	3.88
6.	weakening of economical performances	3.21	3.11	3.60
7.	lack of consensual social strategy regarding the orientation towards stimulating/ protecting the gifted ones	3.15	2.80	3.35
8.	confusion/ violation of ethic values from the professional life	3.10	2.75	3.45
9.	social competence (contests, exams) without respecting the professional - value criteria	3.09	3.25	3.10
10.	lack of political cooperation and cooperation between institutions in order to introduce and support certain interventions for youth, proactive	3.04	2.40	3.66
11.	lack of consensual social strategy regarding the orientation towards stimulating/ protecting the unemployed	2.99	2.50	4.10
12.	lack of consensual social strategy regarding the orientation towards stimulating/ protecting children with Special Education Needs	2.94	2.50	4.20
13.	lack of consensual social strategy regarding the orientation towards stimulating/ protecting old people	2.91	2.40	4.10

The value average of the ranks is: *rank I*- lack of social strategies of protection- 3.51; weak impact of school- 3.48; lack of relevance of political speeches- 3.48; weak cooperation between institution in order to support effective measures for youth- 3.30; frequent leaving of young university graduates abroad- 3.26.

Analyzing the two groups, it can be noticed that there is a significant difference for the first index (1.27) at the level of the two average values- 2.84 for the first group and 4.11 for the second group. The students feel stronger the lack of certain social strategies that are able to orient, stimulate and protect the young generation. This fact is usually perceived through a personal relation; a lot of students continue to study in other cities, except the residence one, and feel the need for such a support stronger. Average values, significantly higher, were obtained for the last indexes which refer to different vulnerable categories that need a real support of stimulating or protecting programmes, such as: the unemployed, the children with special educational needs, elderly people. The average values are here over 4.10 and 4.20, with a difference of 1.70 and 1.60 between the two investigated groups. These differences between values may be explained taking into account the specializations the students have: special psycho-pedagogy and social assistance; this fact allows them to report from the positions of practitioners (future practitioners and professionals in their fields) who keep their terms working with these groups of people, too. On the other hand, the teenagers have different opinions regarding the moral aspect of the values that are broken. An index with a significant difference at the level of perception of the two groups referred to breaking promises and keeping only a declarative level. The teenagers groups recorded an average value of 3.96, comparative with the students' group for whom the average value was 3.11, with a difference of 0.85. In a similar manner, index number 9, breaking values, especially in social competitions (contests, exams) without respecting the professional criteria, is more strongly felt by the teenagers, the average value is 3.25, higher than the one recorded by group 2, which means an average of 3.10, but even here it records a relatively higher value.

The capacity to solidly evaluate the vulnerabilities, dysfunctions and disorders from the residence area of the investigated pupils and students is important for the youth's position in society. Such an image may be examined from the data presented in the graph in *Figure 3*.

Another structure of interest among the youth's perceptions is the *value, the quality and the efficacy of the measures practised by organizations, services and social protection institutions*. The concrete situation found in the concrete research is differentially reflected, on the two subgroups, in the iconic configuration in *Figure 4*.

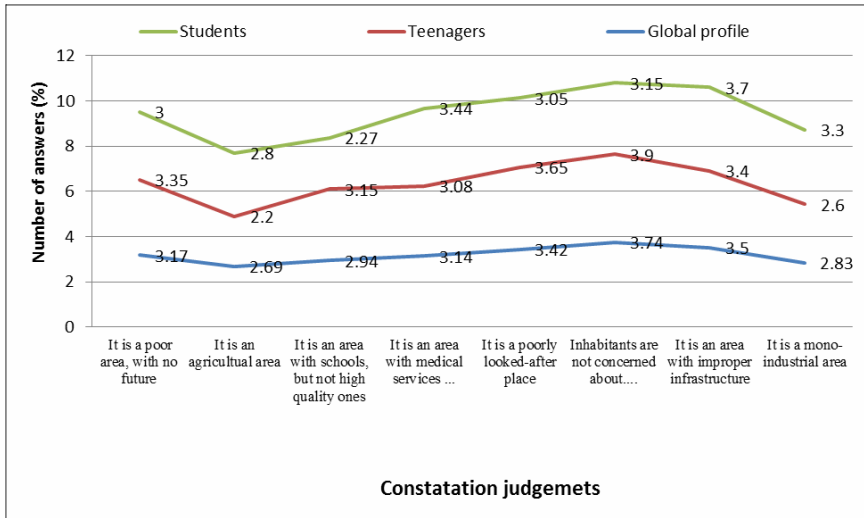


Figure 3. Variation of constataion judgements regarding dysfunctions and regional dysfunctions

The results presented below show that for the investigated level the highest value is taken by *the involvement in the community life*. The presented areas are related to their own accommodation to the daily life, to the ways they can improve their life conditions. It is interesting that teenagers reveal voluntary actions designed for protecting the lives of children, youth and old people as ways of involvement in the community's life. This situation proves not only a spirit of social solidarity, but also the fact that teenagers do not want to become passive social actors of some social phenomena, but active actors, who can personally contribute to the amelioration of the social situation. The qualitative analysis of the data revealed some significant correlations. Among these, the most interesting are: (1) Direct relations between the factors which determine the teenagers' involvement and the areas in which they get involved: the possibility of obtaining incomes that might offer a decent life and the involvement in the personal life of the subjects of the same age (correlation index $r = .689$, $p = 0.01$); a proper daily life style determines as well as the accommodation to critical situations in the near future (correlation index $r = .644$, $p = 0.01$); the opportunity of performing qualitative work determines as well as the involvement in voluntary actions designed for protecting the lives of children, youth, elderly people (correlation index $r = .692$, $p = 0.01$); (2) Inverse correlations between the sex of the investigated subjects and the following fields of involvement: the personal life of people of the same age (correlation index $r = -.591$, $p = 0.01$); the accommodation to new critical situations in the near future (correlation index $r = -.606$, $p = 0.05$); disappointment regarding the manner in which subjects of the same age take part in (get involved in) the social life (correlation index $r = -.536$, $p = 0.05$) (Urea, 2011: 32).

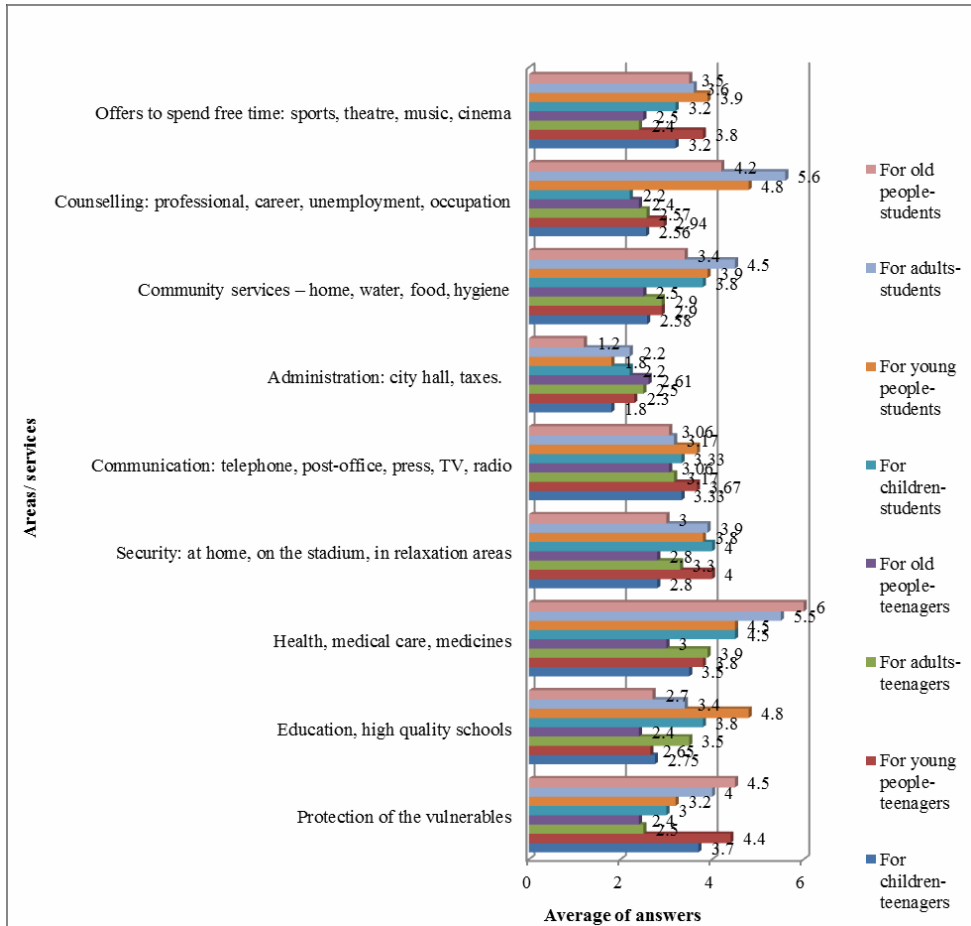


Figure 4. Variation of assigned values regarding effectiveness of institutions, services and social protection

The involvement of pupils and youth in the social life may be examined starting from finding the potential of the motivational factors; their position is illustrated by the image in Figure 5.

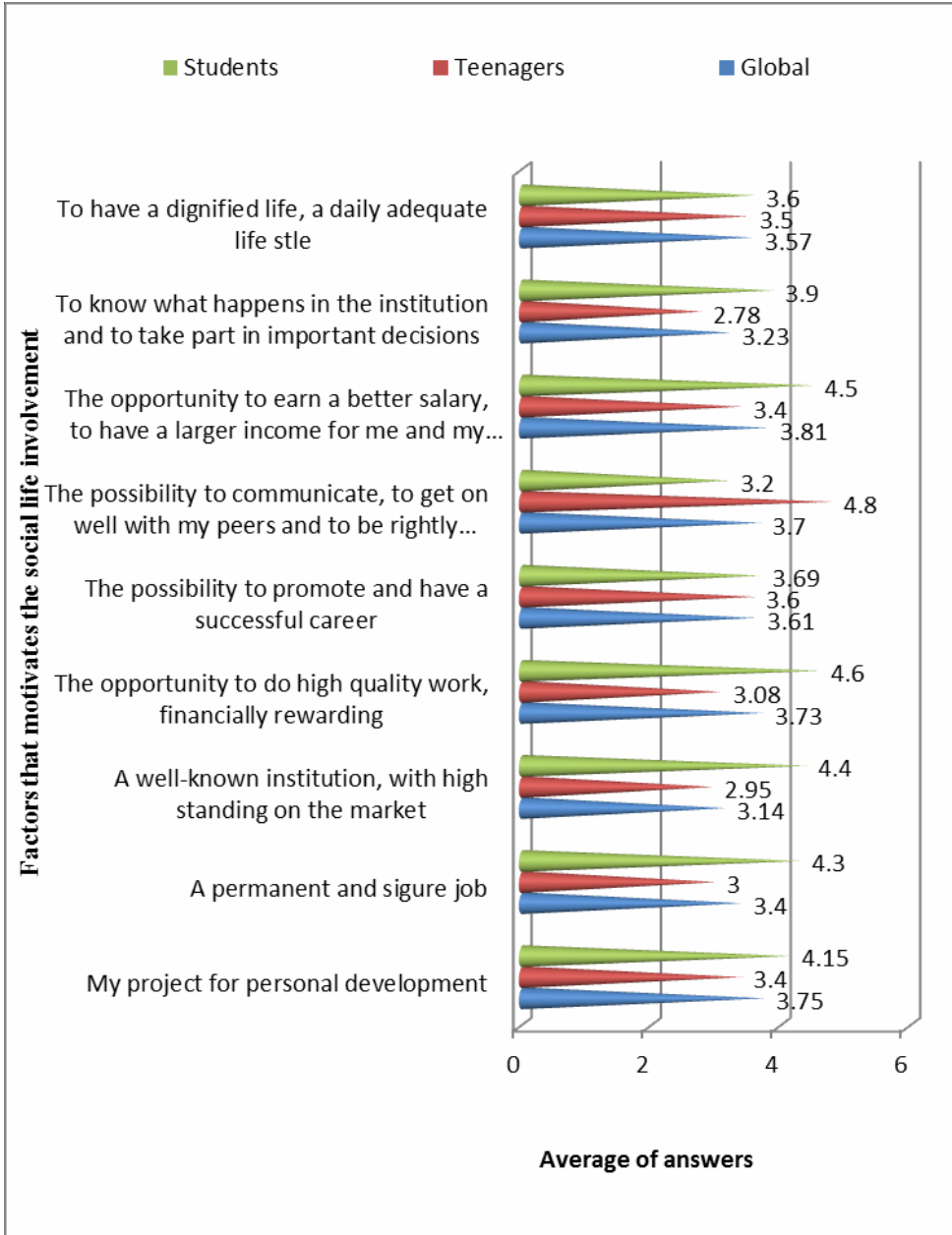


Figure 5. Average variation of motivating factor for participation in society – youth's views

The results presented above reveal the fact that, especially for the investigated teenagers, the desire of reaching an economic-financial independence, a personal autonomy is strongly manifested. The situation should not surprise anybody, taking into account that on the one hand, the subjects come from families with a low economic level, that have got to the level of subsistence during the last three years. On the other hand, the teenagers are passing through the moment when they are searching for social recognition through material meanings that are in fashion. We noticed that the investigated subjects, especially the teenagers, are characterized by the desire of communication with the people of the same age, and this means the desire of getting out from the familial environment in which they live. Could this be a sign of the generation gap? Hard to answer! We notice a specific dynamics of the motivational factors, differentiated in accordance with the subjects' sex. The correlative analysis of the data reveals the fact that girls, more than boys, take more into consideration the modification of the parameters of the daily life, as factors that motivate their participation in the social life. An example can be the index of correlation between the factor *possibility of having a decent life, an adequate daily life style* and *sex* which is $r = .607$, $p = 0.05$).

We should also examine, from the value point of view, the youth's attitude oriented towards taking part in possible changes anticipated in the social life. Such intentions may be noticed in the value distribution presented in the below table (Table 3).

Table 3. *Value of the intention of change*

Nr. crt	Fields of change: orientations	Number of answers (%)		
		Global	Teenagers	Students
1.	To change my residence	24.36	21.8	30.4
2.	To go to a better school in my country	5.12	5.55	4.21
3.	To go to a better school abroad	24.36	24.3	24.5
4.	To change my present working place	24.36	19.6	40.5
5.	To stay here and try to change things progressively	24.36	21.6	32.8
6.	I am content with the present state (job, salary, school)	24.36	20.8	39.2
7.	I do not know what I am going to do, I am still thinking of the opportunities of personal development	24.36	80.5	42.8
8.	I will set up in small business for a better salary	24.36	19.6	40.1
9.	I am going to have more free time, without a fixed and rigid schedule, to relax	24.36	24.8	25.2

Taking into account the essence of the examined problem, we also questioned the *responders' level of confidence in the quality of the sources*, media of information regarding what is going on in the social environment. The answers of the investigated subjects may be examined in the graph below, *Figure 6*.

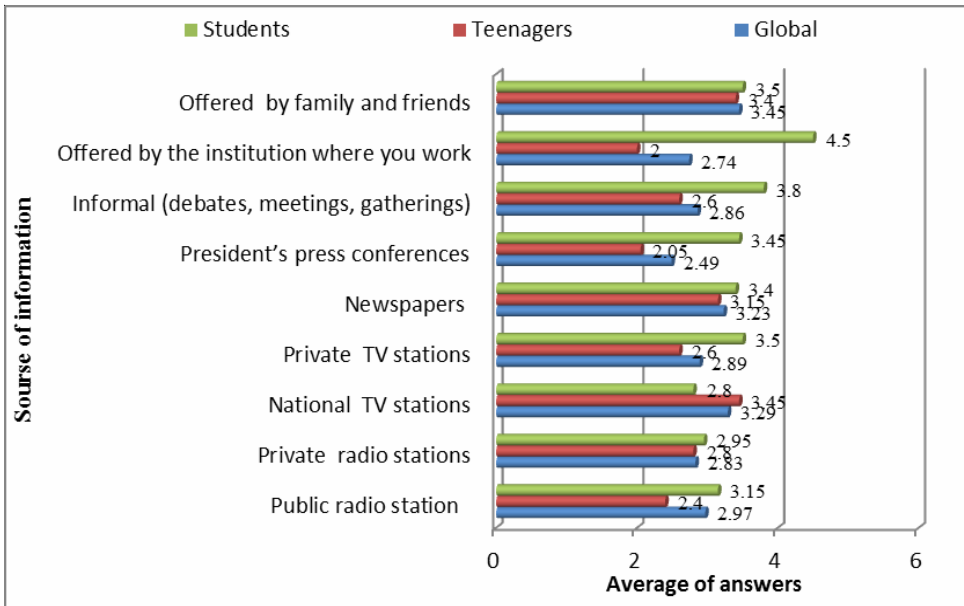


Figure 6. *The level of confidence in the quality of the sources and media of information*

The significant differences between the values which were obtained are recorded at the students' average, the value is above 4.5, the teenagers have an average of 3 points, given to the information offered by the institution where they work (learn). A special signification is given to the familial environment, namely the confidence in the information which come from their family and group of friends, which present close values, the average is 3.5 for both investigated groups (Urea, 2010: 513).

The identification of the main fields of the social life where the youth would like to get involved in the near future has a very special importance. Such an image may be viewed in the below table in a value manner (*Table 4*).

Table 4. *The fields of youth's active involvement- average of the youth's options*

Nr. crt	Fields of involvement	The average of answers		
		Global	Teenagers	Students
1.	Children traffic	4.04	4.10	4.52
2.	Drug, ethnobotanical drug use	4.03	5.6	4.3
3.	Braking the fundamental children's rights	3.69	3.75	3.6
4.	Beating, abuse, violence on children	3.61	4.25	3.5
5.	Juvenile delinquency	3.58	3.75	3.9
6.	Begging	3.55	4.04	3.25
7.	Lack of services of protection of children and vulnerable families	3.54	3.15	4.28
8.	Homeless children	3.44	3.2	4.9
9.	Educational polarization, discrimination between urban- rural, sex, family social status	3.39	3.05	4.5
10.	Illegal work/ economical exploitation from early ages	3.38	2.95	5.1
11.	School, family abandon (early leaving)	3.35	3.10	3.95
12.	Poor health assistance	3.35	2.80	3.75
13.	Lack of access to qualitative education	3.30	2.5	4.5
14.	Social exclusion of the disabled children	3.29	2.1	5.7
15.	Unfounded placement of children in institutions/ protective services	3.27	2.4	4.8

We notice that while the teenagers' involvement in different fields of the social life is based on solidarity, the students get involved from the position of future professionals, of those who will contribute to changing the social realities. Another dimension on which we built the research instrument took into account the perception of the *evolution of the living standard* (welfare, poverty level, personal income level, family income level etc.) for a period of three years. On a Likert scale (from a *very critical* situation to a *very good* situation), the answers were close for the subjects from the two groups. That way, for 75% of the subjects the answers showed a good level and a very good level for 55.7% of the students and 48% of the teenagers . A relatively good situation is appreciated by 37.3% of the students and 32.2 % from the other group The situation was critical for 7% of the students and 20% of the teenagers. We noticed that there were no answers at the end of the grid, *very critical situation* – 0% (Figure 7).

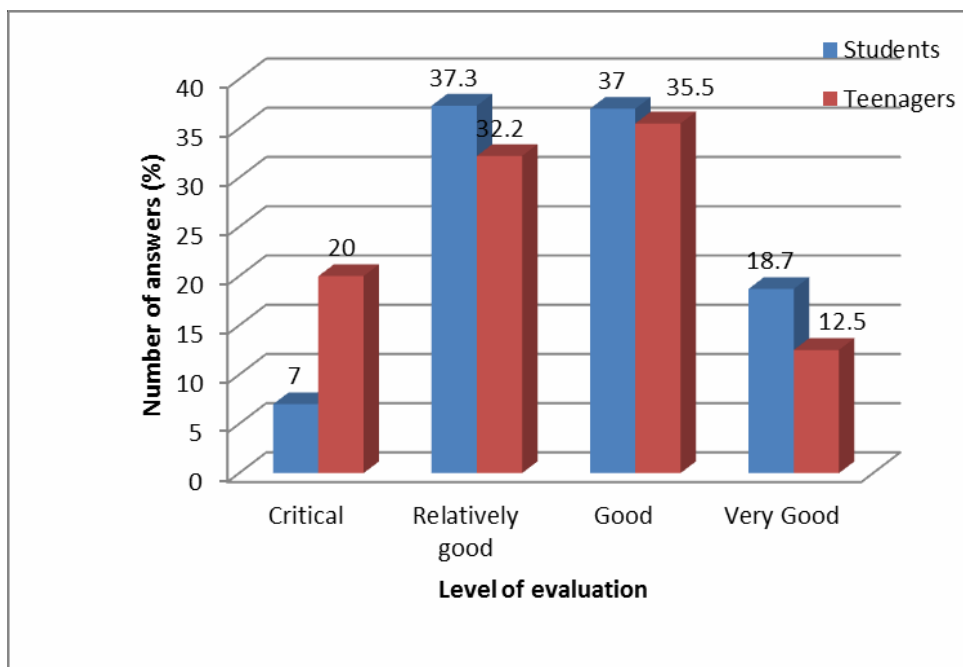


Figure 7. The perception of the evolution of the living standard

Table 5. The sources of information

Nr. crt	The sources present in the variants of answers	Global (Average)	Students (Average)	Teenagers (Average)
1.	Data offered by the representatives of the governmental institutions	0.98	1.52	0.41
2.	National mass-media (newspapers, radio, TV)	0.97	1.21	0.80
3.	Data offered by the Statistics National Institute)	0.92	1.60	0.2
4.	Local and County mass-media	0.90	0.9	0.9
5.	Investigations based on questionnaires made by private institutions	0.89	1.60	0.3
6.	Informed friends, who read and listen to other foreign sources	0.86	0.6	1.14

We can notice that the group of students is more confident in the governmental institutions, the average is 1.52, comparative with 0.41 given to the national mass media (1.21 comparative with 0.80); the local and county mass media recorded equal values, 0.9. The teenagers had significantly higher values for friends as a source of information, 1.14 comparative with 0.6 which was the average presented by the students.

Conclusions

The dynamics of the social life during the process of diminution of the living standard in Romania determines a specific behaviour, reflected in the social life, in the youth's attitude towards vulnerable persons. The teenagers' involvement in the social life in the contemporary moment is conditioned by some factors with social signification which give dimension to the fields of action in the social life of these youth.

Through our research, whose inner consistency offered by the value of Cronbach Alfa Index was of $\alpha = .702$, we noticed: (1) Both female teenagers and students get involved in the social life more than boys; (2) The investigated subjects revealed a *direct relation* between the factor which motivates the participation in the social life and the field in which they get involved: the possibility of getting incomes that offer a decent living standard and the implication in the personal life, and of those of the same age; an adequate style of daily life determines the level of accommodation to new critical situations in the near future; the opportunity of performing qualitative work determines the involvement in voluntary activities designed for protecting the lives of children, youth, old people; (3) The involvement in the social life of the investigated subjects is conditioned by the level of perception of the social phenomena and their level of education; (4) The present social policies from the field of protection of youth and teenagers have to be oriented to supporting their families, too, to finding genuine methods of social protection of people who pass through a crisis period or of replacing the lack of family through different models of intervention. Moreover, social and educational policies should offer equal chances to all teenagers and students, regardless of their origin or their needs.

The social inclusion policies, especially those regarding the educational field, will have as main objectives the following: (1) To create opportunities and facilities in order to prevent school abandon, and the phenomena which are related to it; (2) To develop social educational programmes to support families. School is the one that should take action for teenagers and youth, helping those who face social educational inclusion problems, supporting the families with more children or the single parent families, who are victims of the "new poverty". The social assistance, the specialized services are the ones who should offer support (material, psychological) in order to come out from crisis situations.

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