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**Family relationships  
in the context of work flexibilisation  
under post-communism**

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The context in which flexibility of work is to be identified in Bulgaria is the liberalisation of economy and political life since 1989. In a way, the reforms are leading to a flexibilisation of all former social structural patterns and especially those in the field of work. Thus during the one-party regime work patterns were highly standardised, strictly regulated, full-time, permanent and secure. Self-employment, free-lancing, home-working, fixed-term contracts and other 'non-standard' jobs and careers were very limited in number during the four decades of communist rule. There were no real labour markets, as the state allocated school and university graduates to places in the state owned companies where they could stay till retirement. Proclaimed to be The basic human right, the right to work was also an obligation to work and could only be exercised as a full-time occupation. Changing jobs between workplaces was strongly discouraged as undesired 'fluidity' of the labour force while combining jobs was sanctioned as a lack of full devotion to the goal of 'work self-realisation' of the personality.

The social transformation in the 1990s has resulted in less formal regulation, less control, more insecurity and greater diversity of work. The developing market economy provides a wider scope of opportunities to work in different sectors of the economy: state, privatised, newly founded private, foreign implants, mixed. They offer varying conditions of work with varying arrangements of working time and place. At first seen as a solution to the inefficiency of labour in the centrally planned economy, mass unemployment has persisted for the whole decade of transition, staying at two-digit levels. The sudden collapse of the system of full employment and life-long jobs, matched with a fifty-percent drop in economic output for the first five years of reforms have created segmented and fractured labour markets. The wide-scale de-structuring of the former regulators in economy, politics, education, health care and other social spheres force individuals and households to invent flexible strategies to adapt to the new situation.

The lasting economic difficulties matched with the retarded introduction of new effective legislation make a strong impact on the activities and relations of family members. While few find a window of opportunities to develop successful business initiatives, the majority see survival as their goal and turn to traditional sources of support: home production, informal economic exchange, and care provided by the extended family. Households combine paid and unpaid work both outside and inside the home in their economic efforts. This high integration of home and work places family members in a complex set of relationships strengthening the traditional division of labour between genders and generations.

This paper is an attempt to analyse flexible work and family strategies in Bulgaria on the basis of results from a nation-wide face-to-face survey<sup>1</sup> carried out in February-March 2001. The two-stage probability sample included 1806 individuals in working age, who provided information about their own and their household members' work career and

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<sup>1</sup> The study is part of the project Households, Work and Flexibility (HWF) funded by the European Commission under the Fifth Framework Programme.

individual and household strategies to combine work and care<sup>2</sup>. The paper starts with a reflection over the meanings of flexibility in different national contexts. It then proceeds with a discussion of the patterns of flexibility in terms of time, place and conditions of work and how these are distributed according to age and gender. The third part of the paper analyses the patterns of integration of home and work, the flexible combinations of childcare, informal and voluntary work, as well as the perceptions of family and work arrangements in the household.

## **I. The Flexibility Debate**

Flexibility of work is not a hot topic in social sciences' debate in Bulgaria. Other issues have been extensively studied and widely discussed after the start of reforms in 1989, such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness, middle class formation, entrepreneurship, gender inequalities, to mention just a few from the topics of the thematic volumes of 'Sociological Problems', the only one specialised sociological journal in the country since 1993. Publications in the field of social policy, industrial relations, human resource management, macro and microeconomics have scarcely touched the issue usually as an illustration of world trends rather than as an examination of the situation in Bulgarian economy (Atanasova, 1998; Beleva et al, 1997; Keremidchieva, 1998; Shopov, 1997). They have been concerned more with the delineation of policy implications of flexible labour, giving them either optimistic or pessimistic interpretations, rather than with data collection, trend analysis, scrutiny of everyday practices, legal regulations, individual and group identities.

Nevertheless, these deliberations have highlighted various aspects of flexibility in terms of work conditions, place and time variations, and adaptability of household strategies. 'Under-employment', 'inferior employment', 'part-time work', 'temporary work', 'self-employment', 'informal work regulations', 'de-standardisation of work', 'atypical employment', 'work in the informal economy' are all concepts used to study and explain the new processes comprising the growth of flexible labour under post-communism (Dimitrova, 1995; Chavdarova, 2001; Manolov, 1995; Rakadzijska, 1998; Stoilova, 2001; Tilkidziev, 1998; Todorov et al, 2000; Vladimirov et al, 1998). This diversity of terms in Bulgarian literature is not so much a lack of theoretical precision, as a reflection of the different meanings and perspectives of the authors a situation similar to the debate in Western and (Far) Eastern literature, described by Felstead and Jenson (1999).

In the UK for example the discussion started with the flexible-firm thesis (Atkinson and Meager, 1986; Doeringer and Piore, 1971) according to which employers deliberately organised their workforce in two separate segments – a core and a periphery. Flexible workers are in the second group representing an easily disposable workforce on part-time, temporary or subcontracting basis. More recent research has focused on functional flexibility such as multi-skilling and multi-tasking, work-place flexibility and above all part-time work (Felstead et al, 2000, Heery and Salmon, 2000). In the Netherlands flexibility of work, most often understood as part-time work, is at the centre of public discussions as a policy solution to unemployment and a way for enabling the

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<sup>2</sup> A fuller description of methodology can be found in the survey report 'Flexible Work and Household Strategies in Bulgaria' (Kovacheva and Pancheva, 2002).

reconciliation of work and family life (Schmid, 1997). In Sweden, the debate was triggered by the increasing global competition, introduction of new technologies and changing consumer patterns (Boje and Gronlund, 2001). The focus is placed on temporary employment and the distinction between numeric and functional flexibility. The rising flexibility is widely seen as leading to a segmented labour market which undermines the solidaristic wage policy and work security for all.

The discourse on flexibility and its social implications largely reflects the different welfare state models (Esping-Anderson, 1990). While in the USA the low unemployment rate has been achieved by high deregulation of the labour market, matched with low wages and flexible work, in the European Union countries the strategy is to combine flexible work with preserving social protection (European Commission, 2001). Promoting flexibility is in congruence with the strategic goals of developing a knowledge-based economy and rising the quality of work.

The great variety of understandings and evaluations of flexible work is also linked to the large variations between its different patterns. Under the same label come such diverging forms as on-call and agency work and expert subcontracting, casual and highly qualified work, self-employment and work without a written contract. However, a common characteristics emerging from the pluralism of forms is that they all represent a break with the standard full-time, permanent, wage legally binding employment in the formal economy. There are three very significant aspects of flexible employment, which this paper examines in the context of work restructuring in Bulgaria: flexibility of time, place and conditions (Wallace, 2002).

## II. Patterns of flexible work in Bulgaria

### 1. Flexibility of Time

The flexible working time is usually studied as part-time work. Besides this pattern, the HWF survey also measured overtime work, flexitime, shift work, annual-hour contract, and term-time working. A significant share of the workforce in Bulgaria had a working time deviating from the norm of 40 hours a week. One fifth of all - 18.3% of men and 21.8% of women - were part-time workers. Slightly less (15%) were the numbers of those working longer hours. Women dominated in the group with standard working time, men - among those working extra time. The concentration of women in part-time work in Bulgaria was much smaller than in the West where in 2001 women outnumbered men in a ratio 3 to 1 in the average (European Commission, 2001: 15).

**Table 1. Usual Weekly Working Time according to Gender (%)**

<b>Working Time in Hours</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
1-9	5.3	5.5	5.1
10-19	2.4	2.7	2.1
20-29	4.7	3.8	5.5
30-39	7.8	6.6	9.1
40-49	65.3	63.2	67.4
50-59	6.3	6.8	5.9
60 and more	8.1	11.4	4.9

According to age, it was the oldest age group that was concentrated among those working less than the standard working time. Part-time work was also more typical for young people – up to the age of 24. The high incidence of working extra time revealed a typical trend for the newly established labour markets in Bulgaria – both employers and employees preferred this option. For employers it was cheaper to have the same people working extra-time rather than having different part-time employees. For employees this was an easier way to add to one’s income rather than holding a second job in a different company – only 5% or three times less of the respondents declared having more than one job.

Flexible schedules were even more common than working for a non-standard number of hours. About 40% reported some type of flexible working schedule. The most widespread form of irregular working time was shift work, including rotating, night and weekend and variable shifts. Women worked regular hours more often than men but also they did shift work more often. Men tended to have a working schedule that varied all the time or work flexitime more often than women.

**Table 2. Working Schedules according to Gender (%)**

Schedule	Total	Men	Women
Regular working hours	58.9	55.4	62.5
Shift work	19.4	17.5	21.4
Flexitime	9.3	11.3	7.3
Other fixed	4.7	4.5	4.8
Varies all the time	7.7	11.3	4.0

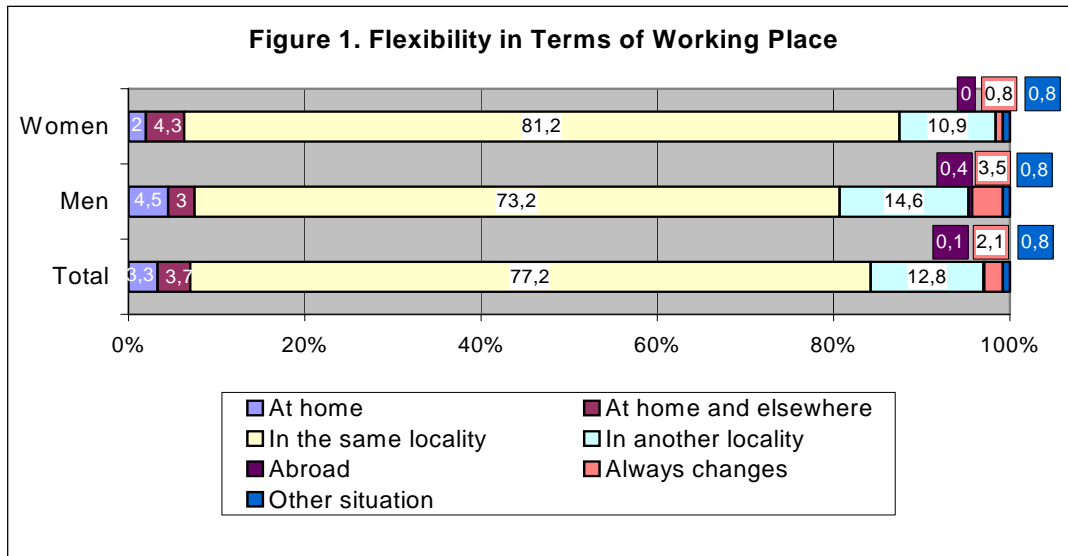
With age the incidence of regular work hours rose. In the opposite direction changed the pattern of doing shift work – its incidence declined with age. Young people were over represented among all groups of employees with irregular working schedules.

The subjective satisfaction with working time and schedule was quite high. Three quarters of respondents preferred to keep working the same number of hours. While gender did not make a significant difference, age did, with young people tending to favor working less time. Every tenth person wanted to work more hours and the most important reason for all gender and age categories was that they needed more money – 82.2% of respondents had chosen this answer. Career concerns or opportunities to finish more interesting tasks were pointed at by minute shares of the sample. The motivation for wanting to work fewer hours was more varied. The most common reason was to have more time for the family. This was the single most important reason for women, while for men this reason was closely followed by other considerations such as having time for other ways of earning money. Age groups also differed in their motivation. While family commitments was the single most important reason for the group near retirement age, for young people it was closely followed by having more time for leisure or for studying and training.

## 2. Flexibility of Place

This pattern of flexible work is associated with the shift of work from the regular structure of the industrial enterprise and office into new locations: toward the home or

abroad, or various combinations of changing working places. The HWF survey measured a lower spread of this type of flexibility among Bulgarian workforce – a fifth had some kind of spatial flexibility. Working mainly or partially at home were less than 7% of respondents and 13% commuted for work in another settlement.



The flexible working place was more typical for men than for women and for the middle age group than for the rest. Despite that the Labour Code allows women-mothers of children up to the age of 6 to work in the home, men outnumbered women in this type of flexible work. Also men tended to be more mobile and more often traveled to work in another locality or had their working place ‘changing all the time’.

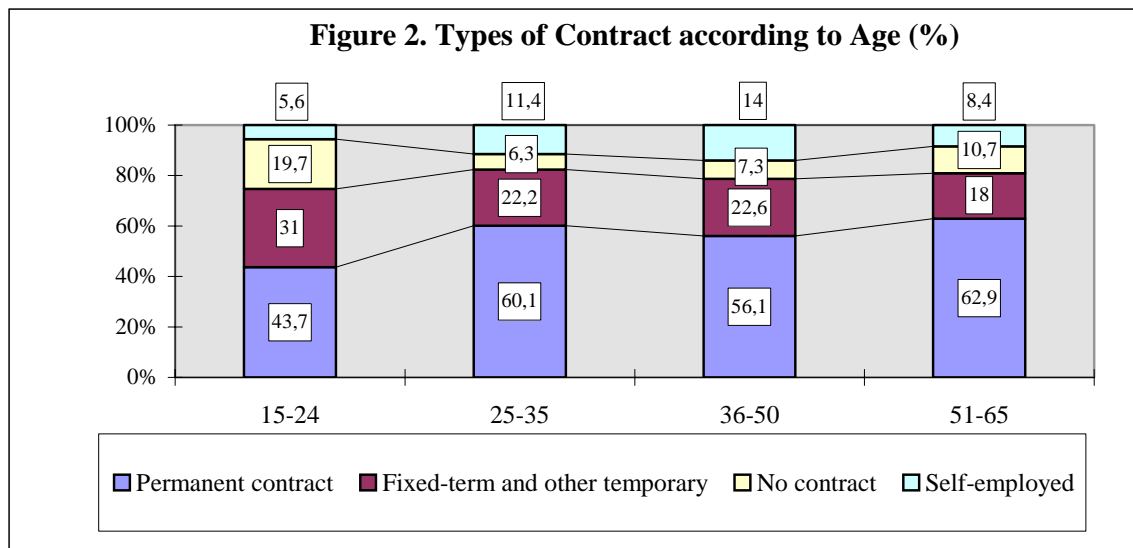
Data about people’s motivation for a particular working place throws more light on the type of place flexibility typical for Bulgaria. The most common reason for working at home chosen by over a third the respondents was ‘lack of other opportunities’. The pressure from domestic commitments was pointed at three times more rarely and the desire to spend more time with the family – six times more rarely. The standard working place at the enterprise or office brought the highest satisfaction. It was the most flexible workers in terms of working place were the least satisfied with their working arrangements. The highest share of dissatisfied (fully or somewhat) respondents - 28.6% - was found among those whose working place always changed, then among those working at home - 22.6%, and then among those travelling to another locality – 16%. Very rarely employees themselves decided where to fulfil their work tasks. Data revealed that one in five decided autonomously and one in ten did this together with their employers. Most often it was the employer who defined where the job should be done. Place flexibility was a forced solution to the workforce in the country under the current conditions.

### 3. Flexibility of conditions

This type of flexibility is determined by the legal and institutional conditions of work in a given country and the policies and practices of employment. In the context of

postcommunist Bulgaria this was the most common form of flexible work – 42.4% of the respondents worked under non-standard conditions. A fifth of all respondents held a fixed-term contract and it was slightly more typical for women than for men. The reverse was the situation with the work without contract – this practice, shared by 9% of the respondents, was less typical for women than for men. The other flexible form of work – self-employment – characterised 12% of the workforce. More men than women were self-employed. Other patterns of flexible conditions of work were a contract with a reduced or no working time, ‘on call’ basis, work for a temporary work agency, on a fee only basis, or subject to performance. These types of contracts were very rare for the main job of Bulgarian workforce and yet, men tended to hold such contracts twice more often than women. In general women preferred the more secure and legally binding forms of contracts. The standard form - permanent contract – was held by just over a half of the respondents and was more typical for women than for men.

Age clearly set limits for the legal conditions of the main job that people hold. The youngest age group – up to 24 years – had the lowest share of those with permanent contracts and the highest share of those working without contract. Every third young person had a fixed term of other temporary contract. The oldest age group among the employed – over 50 years - had the highest share of permanent contracts. Self-employment was most typical for the adult generation – those in ‘prime age’ 36-50. The incidence of having some kind of fixed-term or temporary job declined with age – from a share of 31% in the youngest age cohort to a share of 18% in the oldest age cohort. In conclusion, youth was the group with the highest level of flexibility in terms of the legal conditions of work.



Our hypothesis was that more people (than 8.6% of the respondents) would be working without a contract – the most ‘flexible’ form in Bulgarian conditions. One reason for this

low share might be that the respondents did not want to declare this illegal form of work (the non-response rate was high). Additional reason might be that people in the country preferred to have some form of a legal contract on the main job and work off the records additionally. To check this opportunity we looked into the forms of contracts respondents held on their additional jobs. The survey confirmed the assumption about the high level of flexibility among the additional jobs. Half of these were on a self-employed basis, a third without any contract and the rest divided between work on a fee basis, subject to performance and other types. The flexibility in conditions of additional jobs was matched with a high level of other types of flexibility – the second and third jobs were mostly part-time or evening and weekend, and done at home or from a changing work place.

### **III. Integration of home and work**

Since Max Weber the division between home and work has been seen as a factor for raising the efficiency of work and protecting personal freedom in the private sphere. In late modern societies the borders have become blurred and now the integration of home and work is the issue at stake (Beck, 2000). In Bulgaria speeded industrialisation was carried out by the communist regime in the second half of the 20th century, bringing economic rationality to the separation between home and work. Additional reason for raising barriers between the two was the fact that the world of work was under a strict party control while the private world of the family could be protected from outside political and ideological interference. However, economic necessities, the permanent deficits of the centrally planned economy and the low living standards of the population in particular, made the home a productive unity (Smollet, 1985; Creed, 1998; Chavdarova, 1993; Tilkidziev, 1998; Vladimirov, 1998).

With the reforms toward a market economy it was expected that the household's business initiative would be liberated and family businesses would develop while the rest of the population would have enough income from paid labour to give up the inefficient home production. However, the mass impoverishment and the restrictions in front of small and medium size businesses did not confirm this expectation. Our survey revealed that household members in Bulgaria in their vast majority continued to combine paid work outside the home and unpaid work inside the home.

#### **1. Domestic work and childcare arrangements**

When living in a household people have to perform many domestic tasks with different repeatability, intensity, time consumption, and significance for the functioning of the household. They have to make decisions how to divide the various tasks among themselves and accept or change traditional domestic roles. In the survey we asked our respondents who usually performed nine of the most common domestic tasks.

As seen from Table 4, most domestic tasks in Bulgarian households were carried out by household members themselves. Market mechanisms appeared to have entered only in the sphere of house repairs and even here only one and a half per cent of the households could afford to pay someone to do this task. This share is too low to be split into the main socio-demographic categories in order to measure factor influences.



**Table 3. Division of Domestic Tasks between Household Members (%)***(How is the task usually done?)*

Tasks	Repair	Cooking	Cleaning	Washing	Shopping	Child care	Care of sick child	Care of a sick relative	Work in the garden
<b>Respondent</b>	48.5	45	45.3	46.5	45	28.3	27.8	25.7	20.5
<b>Partner</b>	32.5	31.3	29.2	32.5	24.8	18.6	18.6	11.7	9.7
<b>Father</b>	9	0.5	0.4	0.4	1.2	0.5	0.5	0.4	2.8
<b>Mother</b>	0.6	16.3	11.8	12.9	9.4	6.7	6.3	6.1	3.8
<b>Son</b>	2.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.9	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3
<b>Daughter</b>	-	1.1	2.1	1.7	1.7	1.7	2.1	0.4	0.1
<b>Member</b>	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.2
<b>Equally</b>	3.6	4.7	10.5	4.9	15.8	11.4	10.6	14.6	21.5
<b>Outsider</b>	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	-	-	0.1	0.1
<b>Pay s.o.</b>	1.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1	0.1
<b>Other</b>	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.1
<b>Not appl.</b>	0.5	0.2	0.1	-	0.1	31.6	33.2	39.8	40.8

The table demonstrates a high specialization of tasks in Bulgarian households – very rarely the responsibility was equally divided among the household members. The highest share of equal burden got the work in the garden or agricultural plot – in one fifth of the households. This was followed by shopping and care for a sick relative – these responsibilities were divided equally in 15% of the households.

Domestic roles were different for the different age and gender groups. There was a clear pattern of division of household tasks between generations – in most households the adults did most of the housework. When the children usually did a task, it was more often the daughter than the son. When the sons did something, it was usually only house repairs. Daughters never did repairs but they more often than sons cleaned, took care of a sick child and other tasks. The involvement of the older (third) generation when living in the same household was higher than that of the children and was also clearly biased toward more work done by women than men. The only task that men from this generation did more often than women is house repairs. Women usually did all the rest of the tasks when done by this generation.

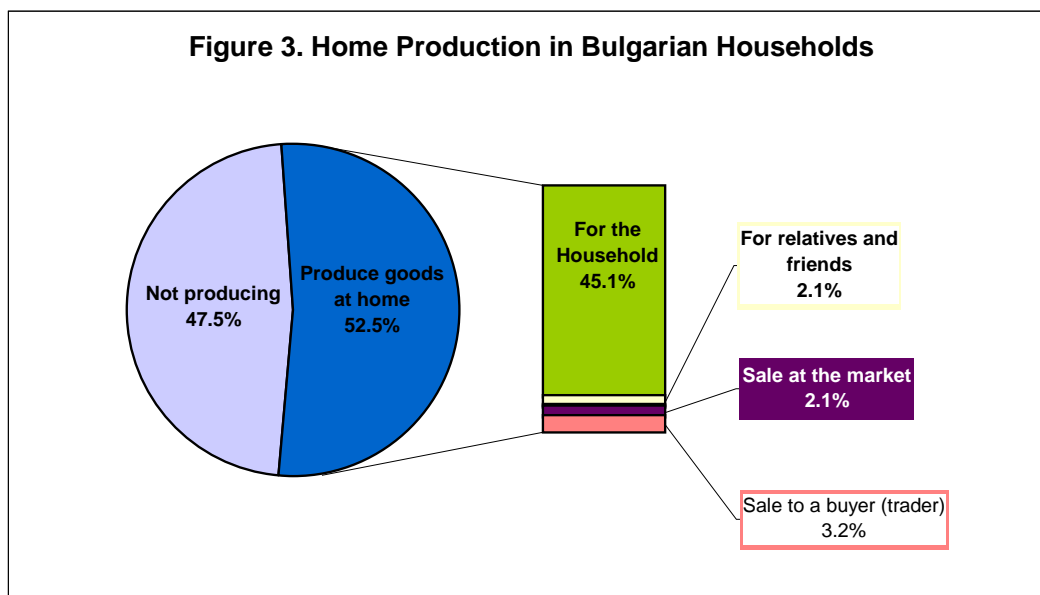
The gender division among the partners in prime age was also highly developed and fixed. Despite the fact that the interviewed partner more often thought that he/she did most of the work, the gender distribution showed that women usually did the cooking, cleaning, washing, shopping, daily care for children, care for sick children, and care for sick relatives. Men most often did house repairs while work in the garden was almost equally divided between male and female partners. The female partner in over 95% of the cases usually did the cleaning, washing, and cooking and in 90% of the cases did the daily care of children, the care of a sick child or a sick relative. In 20% of the cases the male partner does the shopping.

Traditionally Bulgarian women have combined employment and unpaid childcare at home. Under the previous regime they were helped by the extensive set of state-funded crèches and kindergartens, and by the informal network of grandparents and other

relatives. Our data disclose the continuation of this practice despite the reduction of places and the growth of parents' contributions to the funding of public childcare. Market organised childcare or care for children when very young or sick was hardly practised by Bulgarian households. Female partners inside the family – in about 90% of the cases performed both everyday childcare and care of a sick child. Grandparents did these tasks twice more often when living in three-generation households than in two-generation households. Parents accepted the help of grandparents more often in everyday childcare than when the child was sick. Grandparents' support and care for children was most important in single-member households.

## 2. Home production

What is specific for Bulgaria, unlike the situation in advanced market economies, is that not only services on the market are underdeveloped but that a lot of food is produced by the household for its own consumption, thus playing an important part in household economy. Home production is a specific form of integration of home and work in Bulgarian context. The HWF survey revealed the mass scope of home production, even among households living in urban areas. Over a half of the households (52.5%) in Bulgaria were engaged in some pattern of informal agricultural production



The land possessed was usually split into small plots of several Hectares, the average being 5, where households usually grew vegetables and fruits and up to twenty percent raised livestock for meat and milk. Poultry production was also common – a third of the households used meat and eggs produced at their plot of land. Only 5% of the households produced for the market. For the rest – almost a half of all Bulgarian households – the goal was household consumption. The share of the households producing goods for home consumption declined from 58.5% in the lowest-income households, through 52.9% of the second poorest, 48.8% of the middle-income group, and 47.4% of the second richest group to 33.9% of the highest income group. While home production was a widely spread

strategy in Bulgaria, it was more typical for those with less income than for those with the highest incomes.

A common form of home production for Bulgarians is the preservation of fruits and vegetables in bottles or jars for the winter season even by households who do not produce their own material and buy them on the market. This starts in spring and reaches its peak in the autumn. While during socialism the main objective of home preservation was to fill in the shortages of the centrally planned economy, under post-communism this is predominantly a strategy to save money income. Under the previous regime, the jars were not only intended for the household, they also circulated between relatives and friends as a form of support, usually from the rural to the urban relatives and from parents to children. It could be expected this to subside with the development of the market, as well as with the rise in the prices of vegetables and fruits, oil and electricity.

**Table 4. Households by Type and Purpose of Home Preserved Food (%)**

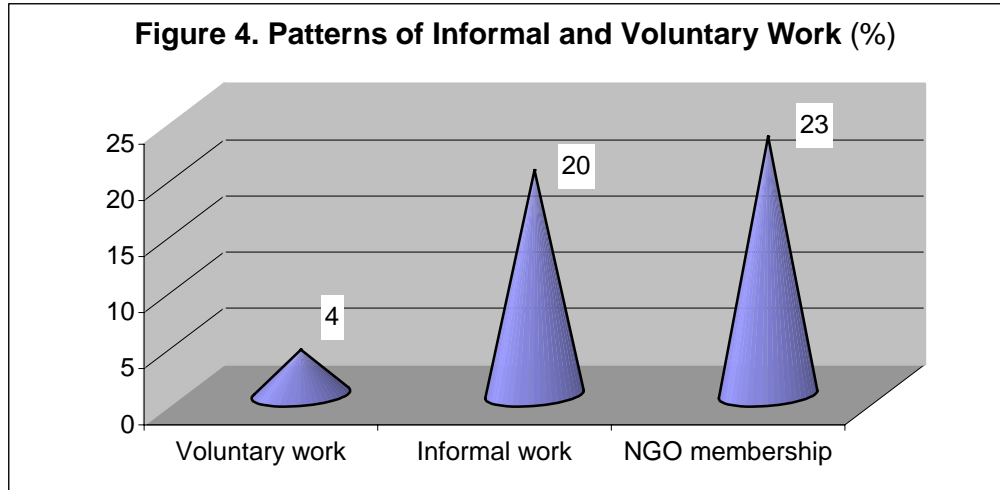
Types of home preserved food	Yes, for the household	Yes, for the household and other relatives	No, but our household gets such food	We do not preserve or get such food
<b>Fruits</b>	77.3	5.4	4.2	13.1
<b>Vegetables</b>	77.2	5.5	4.0	13.2
<b>Meat</b>	38.7	4.2	5.1	52.1

However, we found that this practice continued under post-communism. Close to 90% of Bulgarian households had home preserved fruits and vegetables at their table. Close to fifty per cent consumed home preserved meat. The incidence of exchange, though, was not very high. While we cannot compare the incidence and the proportion of market and home production of fruits and vegetables, the involvement of household members in self-production of food seems to be a common strategy for Bulgarian households in 2001.

### 3. Voluntary and informal work

Given the overwhelming involvement of household members in home production, childcare and domestic tasks, the low incidence of voluntary activities and informal work outside the home was not a surprise. While a quarter of the respondents were members of organisations (most often tradeunions), less than 5% did voluntary work on a regular basis, such as a charity, church, sport club, and others on a regular basis, that is at least monthly. A fifth did informal (unpaid) work by caring for a relative or friend outside the home.

Men tended to do informal and voluntary unpaid work slightly more often than women. So did those living in villages or small towns. The incidence of voluntary work for a non-profit organisation rose with age and with education but the latter not so significantly. Women more often belonged to trade unions, church and cultural organisations. Men were more often members in sport organisations and political parties.



When we take into consideration the informal work both in and outside the home, we can conclude that in Bulgarian households it is definitely women who do most of the unpaid work in the home, while men tend to do most of the unpaid work outside the home. The survey did not measure the amount of time allocated to these tasks, but it is clear that the female role is associated with more regular and time-consuming activities. The male role involves more irregular, accidental tasks.

#### 4. Perceptions of family/work arrangements

Respondents in Bulgaria were largely satisfied with their work and family arrangements. The vast majority never felt strong tension between paid and unpaid work, employment and family life.

**Table 5. Value Orientations Concerning Family/Work Arrangements (%)**

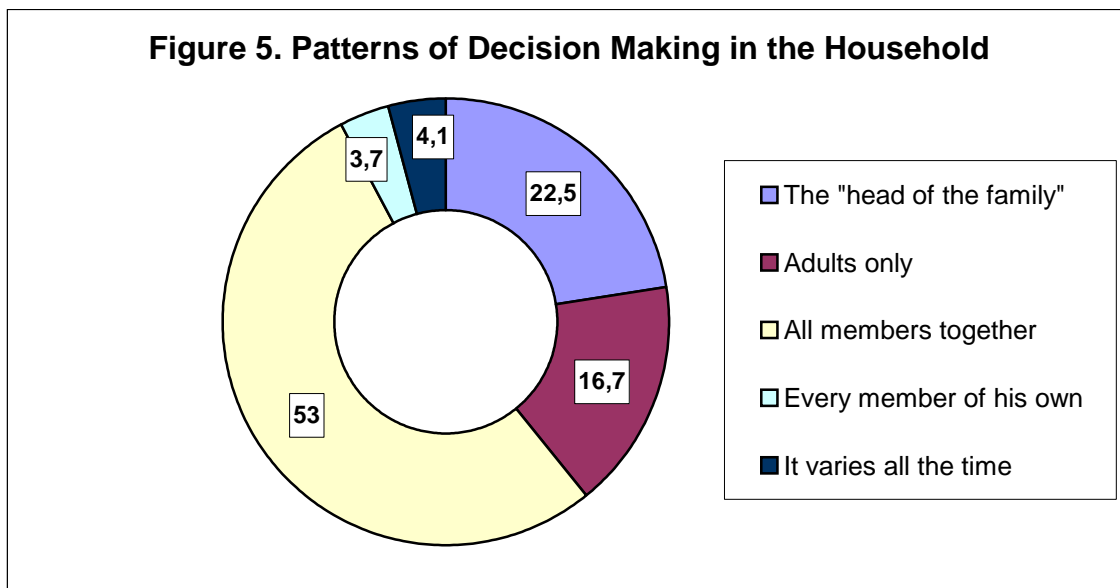
	Always	Often	Some-times	Rarely	Never
<b>My work hinders housework</b>	1.6	6.4	13.9	12.6	65.5
<b>My work hinders family relations</b>	1.1	4.8	9.8	13.9	70.4
<b>Family hinders work</b>	0.4	0.9	4.3	9.5	85.0
<b>I take work at home</b>	0.7	2.3	4.8	5.1	87.2
<b>I wish to spend more time at work</b>	6.9	5.1	8.3	7.8	71.8

Our respondents felt that their work made it difficult to do some of the household tasks that needed to be done more often than that that work made it difficult for them to fulfil their responsibilities towards their family and other important persons. The opposite situation was even rarer – the respondents did not feel pressed by family responsibilities which to prevent them from doing their job adequately. A very low share – about 10% took work from employment to finish at home. Despite these seemingly satisfactorily divisions between work and home, a high percentage – 28.2 – felt that they preferred to spend more time at work than spend more time at home. It was single-member and one-

generation households who felt more rarely that their work was a hindrance for their housework and family relations. The wish to take work at home was equally rare among all types of households, as was the feeling that the family hindered their work.

Given the strongly unequal division of labour within the household concerning the domestic tasks, we expected more conflicts among members over this issue. However, more than two thirds of all respondents said that they ‘always’ agreed in decisions over household finances, division of domestic tasks, and the distribution of time – time spent together and time spent at work. Less than 5% declared having disagreements on those issues ‘always’ and ‘sometimes’ taken together. Gender, education, living in rural or urban area, having or no children did not make a difference in these attitudes, only the youngest age group reported less agreement than the rest. Families with children and particularly those with children aged less than 7 were slightly more conflictuous than the rest. Among them the shares of households ‘always disagreeing’ over time spent at work and over finances were twice higher than the corresponding shares among all households.

Half of the households had a participatory model of decision making. Very high was the share of respondents accepting the notion of ‘family head’ – 22.5%.



As seen from Figure 5, in over a fifth of the households decisions were taken in a ‘monocratic’ manner by the ‘household head’. Independent (separate) financial and time strategies of members were typical for less than 5% of the households. The high incidence of participatory decision-making in the households did not lead to a highly equal distribution of domestic tasks among gender and age groups. As one of our female respondents put it: ‘We all agree that I have to do everything’.

## Conclusions

The meaning of work flexibility in Bulgaria has not yet been clearly defined. The perspectives toward it vary from the negative understanding as 'under-employment' and 'inferior work' to the overoptimistic vision of being 'the solution' to high unemployment and 'the most effective means' to speed up the integration of the country into the European Union and its flexible labour market. A wider discussion and more empirical studies are necessary to reveal the true dimensions of flexible labour and its potential in Bulgaria.

The HWF survey measured a high incidence of the various patterns of flexible work in the country. Atypical or changing working place had a fifth of the respondents, non-standard working hours and schedules had almost two fifths and close to a half had atypical labour contracts. While flexibility in the formal economy remained low, it was the informal sphere that provided a breeding ground for work flexibility.

The household as a community additionally relied upon informal types of work flexibility. Home production on their own plot of land, in which over a half of the households were engaged and home preservation of fruits and vegetables which three quarters of households practised, had high importance for households subsistence. While holding additional jobs was quite rare, such additional income earning activities were typical for every second household. In the Bulgarian mixture of pre-modern and post-modern conditions the household had become an important economic unit, producing as well as consuming goods and services. Domestic tasks, not only the routine cooking, cleaning the house or washing the laundry, but also the more time-consuming and skills-requiring activities such as taking care of a sick child or relative, working in the garden and house repairs were all done by members of the household. Buying such services in the market was very rare and many households just did without long due repairs.

Given this high integration of home and work, household members had to participate in a complex set of relations. Our survey measured a remarkably fixed division of labour within the home instead of a process of negotiating the domestic and employment roles among the members. Particularly strict was the gender division of labour. Women did most of the unpaid work in the home in addition to their formal jobs in the labour market, while men limited themselves to paid work outside the home and tended to engage themselves only in house repairs or do slightly more voluntary work outside the home. The division of labour in the home burdened mostly the middle generation that took the main responsibility for all domestic tasks while the younger household members were only 'helping' them.

Despite this highly unequal division of unpaid work in the home, the patterns of family/work arrangements were largely unquestioned, as was the decision-making in the household. Half of the households had a participatory model of decision making while close to a quarter had a household member playing the role of 'family head'. Disagreements in the household were rarely reported and the reason was more often household finances than the amount of time spent at work or at home.

The twelve years of market reforms in Bulgaria have created a situation, very different from the advanced market economies in the West to which the state and general public in the country aspire. For the majority of the population in the European Union work flexibility is a way to invest more time and energy in the home for a higher quality of family relations and leisure. For the majority of Bulgarian population work flexibility is a way to increase income and has to be complemented by high involvement in unpaid work in the home. While the legal regulations do not bolster work flexibility in the official labour market, the widespread informal income-earning activities are very flexible. Close to a half of all respondents have experienced some pattern of flexible work. This high incidence of flexible work in the sphere of paid labour is combined with a very inflexible division of labour in the home. Married women take the main responsibility of domestic tasks without leaving their paid jobs in the market. Forced by the new economic conditions and strengthened by cultural traditions, these family/work arrangements are accepted by all household members. Family members stick together in their household strategies, combining paid and unpaid work to survive the current difficulties and hope for a better future.

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