

**CAREER DECISION-MAKING FACTORS AND MODELS  
FOR CHOOSING ENGINEERING AS A PROFESSION**  
*/cross-cultural study among Bulgarian and Austrian students/*

The purpose of my present research is to make a comparative analysis on career decision-making factors and models using by Bulgarian and Austrian students upon entrance at university.

This study is actually an extension of my previous one, carried out with beginners from TUG in 2000 and aims at revealing some similarities and differences between Bulgarian and Austrian engineering students regarding career decision-making process and their personnel values and employment outlook. Four main points were basis for our analysis: motivational factors of students' career choice; models and mechanisms they use while deciding, actual attitude regarding their choice and studies; and their further plans and expectations.

**Conclusions deduced from the comparative analysis:**

There are some special socio-psychological factors that influence the choice of engineering as a profession:

- Family is the most powerful factor for Austrian sample (for both genders), whereas for Bulgarian one, these are books and friends.
- In general, for female students from both samples are usual mostly external factors (direct or indirect influence of other people), whereas for males, mostly internal ones (personal interests).
- Important reasons for career choice of Bulgarian students are the social image (career prestige) and the opportunities for realization, what correlates strongly with the specificity of current economical situation in the country. The success from high school is also an argument for the professional orientation of youths in Bulgaria.
- Austrian students choose engineering as a profession using noncompensatory decision-making strategies and mechanisms (engineering is their only one choice), whereas Bulgarian students use often compensatory ones (sometimes they are interested just to enter university).
- The participants from both samples are guiding by combined choice models (both, econometric and sociological), although the components they focus on are different.
- Despite the differences between factors influencing the career choice of Bulgarian and Austrian students, there are no significant differences in their attitude to engineering. Most of them have a positive attitude to engineering as a profession, as well as to their subject of studies at university and do not want to change it.
- Engineering students have no definitely gender related model of attitude to engineering as a masculine profession, especially in Bulgaria.
- There are no significant differences also in the direction of students' goals, and ambitions regarding their professional achievements. However, Bulgarian students' ideas about their further achievements are more concrete and more pessimistic in the same time, what completely corresponds to the socio-economical reality in the country.