

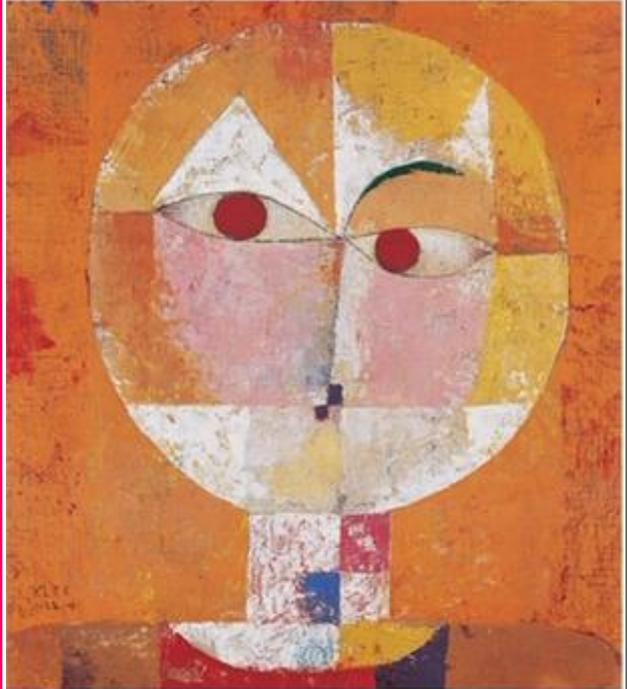
# opción

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# **Sociocultural aspect as a key factor of successful activity**

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## **Abstract**

The article comprehensively considers indicators of the rural regions' social development via comparative quantitative research methods. The analysis shows an acceptable level of social development in Europe and a low level of social development in Asia and Latin America, which generally affects the quality of social work, especially in rural regions. The study concludes that online technologies significantly change the social work practice, forming its fundamentally new forms.

**Keywords:** Social Work, Rural, Region, Indicator, Development.

## Aspecto sociocultural como factor clave de una actividad exitosa

### Resumen

El artículo considera exhaustivamente los indicadores del desarrollo social de las regiones rurales a través de métodos de investigación cuantitativa comparativa. El análisis muestra un nivel aceptable de desarrollo social en Europa y un bajo nivel de desarrollo social en Asia y América Latina, que generalmente afecta la calidad del trabajo social, especialmente en las regiones rurales. El estudio concluye que las tecnologías en línea cambian significativamente la práctica del trabajo social, formando sus formas fundamentalmente nuevas.

**Palabras clave:** Trabajo social, Rural, Región, Indicador, Desarrollo.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, a person living in a village endures difficult social and economic conditions. This problem is relevant for societies of different development. The rural region has always been distinguished by a low level of social life, difficult working and living conditions in comparison to urban areas (HERNÁNDEZ, CHUMACEIRO, RAVINA-RIPOLL and DEL RÍO, 2019). The sociocultural environment of the rural region has its own peculiarities and differs from the sociocultural environment of the city. The differences are in the relationships between people, with nature, culture, society. Thus, geographical and regional peculiarities determine the essence, forms and methods of social work (HERNÁNDEZ, CHUMACEIRO and RAVINA-RIPOLL, 2019)

The system of everyday life has been forming for centuries in the village. This system is aimed at providing, first of all, the physical comfort of a person. Cultural traditions harmonized the relationship of a person with the environment, and then contributed to a person's mental and spiritual health (HERNÁNDEZ, CHUMACEIRO and RAVINA-RIPOLL, 2019). Certain games, singing, religious rites, sayings, proverbs had spiritual potential, and, consequently, a certain healing and educational impact (HERNÁNDEZ, CHUMACEIRO, ZIRITT and ACURERO, 2018). In the practice of family upbringing, relations between siblings are of considerable importance. A village child has his/her own system of physical and social components, which are regulated by customs, social rituals and parents' perceptions of children in general.

Public opinion in the rural household paradigm firmly protects the integrity of the family as this is the key aspect of raising children. The village family has always maintained upbringing traditions. The village family has been the source of national identity as well (HERNÁNDEZ, CHUMACEIRO and RAVINA-RIPOLL, 2019). With the permanent development of society, changes are also taking place in the structure of the family and the relationships between its individual members. The latter is manifested in such phenomena as small families, weakening of the traditional role of the father, and the employment of women. At the same time, the trends in the development of households in the world show the orientation of families towards the establishment of democratic, equal relations

(AGUINIGA ET AL., 2013; RAMÍREZ and HUGUETH, 2017; VILLALOBOS and RAMÍREZ, 2018; CHERKASOV ET AL., 2019).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The concept of social development has become one of the most important areas of research in the fields of sociology, psychology, economics and public administration. Therefore, indicators of regional social development are often considered as an alternative to indicators of economic development, which is a necessary but still insufficient condition for social development (HERNÁNDEZ, CHUMACEIRO, RAVINA-RIPOLL and DEL RÍO, 2019). Over the past decade, the demand for evidence-based practice (Evidence-Based Practice, EBP) in social work has increased. Studies show that evidence-based practice facilitates decision-making based on current research and reduces the number of ineffective interventions. However, social workers practicing in rural areas face difficulties in using evidence in their work.

Rural social services face unique challenges in recruiting and retaining social workers (BROWN ET AL., 2017; HERNÁNDEZ, CHUMACEIRO, ZIRITT and ACURERO, 2018; VILLALOBOS, RAMÍREZ and DÍAZ-CID, 2019). A study of job satisfaction among rural social workers shows the following. Rural social workers are usually from rural areas or have been trained in rural areas. Among rural social workers, there is low job satisfaction, which determines staff turnover. There are differences between rural and urban areas in terms of job satisfaction. However, an important aspect to be

considered is explained by RAMIREZ, VILLALOBOS and HERRERA (2018). They point out that when visualizing the management of human talent as a strategic part in organizations, it represents a significant increase in economic value, therefore, seeks quality and value to strengthen their benefits, resulting in the development of people.

### **3. METHODS**

Rural regions can be classified according to different criteria. The indicators of the demographic, administrative, infrastructural and social development of the region are conditionally divided into two groups: General criteria and criteria reflecting problems in rural regions. General criteria include geographical location, number of inhabitants, population density, remoteness from urban centers and indicators characterizing the natural conditions of the area. The second group of criteria includes indicators that demonstrate the socioeconomic problems of the region. Such indicators include unemployment, age structure, migration, types of migration, level of infrastructure development, development of the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, gross value added per capita, average wage.

Social indicators show the standard of living, poverty and the quality of access to social services. The social indicator is a statistical indicator or a system of indicators that most accurately reflects the situation in the region allocated for observation. The system of social indicators includes three levels of indicators. The first level is composed of initial social indicators, i.e. a complete list of statistical

indicators selected for operational analysis. At the second level, social indicators are aggregated within each block or one of them is selected that most closely reflects the actual situation in a particular region. At the final, third level, a generalizing indicator should be obtained that characterizes a cumulative assessment of the situation in the region as a whole. It is formed on the basis of indicators calculated at the previous stage of aggregation.

The spheres of social life and social processes are very specific and cannot be adequately displayed using universal measuring and analytical tools. Due to this fact, various measuring systems and indicators are used in the statistics that are specialized for the corresponding social structures. Such indicators reflect the social life of society, which is the subject of a study of social statistics. The most significant areas of research in social statistics include:

- Social and demographic structure of the population and its dynamics;
- Standards of living;
- Level of well-being;
- The level of public health;
- Culture and education;
- Moral statistics;
- Public opinion;
- Political life.

The population growth rate is a relative value expressed as a percentage. The latter is calculated as an indicator of the total population increase (or its decrease, then the indicator has a negative

value). This indicator is calculated on an annual basis and taking into account natural growth and international migration. There is a rating of the countries by the level of urbanization. It is a comparative analysis of statistical data on the share of the urban population in the total population of countries and territories of the world. The level of urbanization is understood as the share of the urban population in the total population. Urbanization of a country is a process of increasing the share of the urban population. The latter is accompanied by an increase in the economic, political and cultural significance of cities compared to rural areas.

The Social Progress Index —is a combined indicator that measures the achievements of countries in terms of social welfare and social development. The index does not include indicators of economic development, but is intended to measure social well-being. The index covers countries for which reliable indicators are available. The index is based on a combination of data from public opinion polls (12%), expert opinions in the field of development (25%) and statistical information from international organizations (61%). When determining success in the field of social development, more than 50 indicators are taken into account, combined into three main groups:

- 1) Basic human needs (food, access to medical care, housing, access to water, electricity and domestic services, level of personal safety).
- 2) Fundamentals of human well-being (access to basic knowledge, population literacy rate, access to information and

means of communication, level of health care, environmental sustainability).

3) Opportunities for human development. Such as level of personal and civil liberties, ensuring human rights and opportunities to decision-making and self-actualization.

The index measures a country's achievements on a scale from 0 (lowest degree) to 100 (highest degree), based on data in three basic categories. Publicly available statistics are used as data sources. A general assessment of the social progress index is a simple average of three dimensions. Each dimension is a simple average of its four components.

#### **4. RESULTS**

Annual population growth rate – this is the exponential rate of population growth in the middle of the year from the previous year to the current year, expressed as a percentage. The population size is based on the actual definition of the population, which takes into account all residents regardless of their legal status or residence. As can be seen from the graph (Fig. 1), the annual growth rates in the world are increasing. While a tendency to a slowdown in the growth rates of both the urban (Fig. 2) and the rural population (Fig. 3) can be noted.

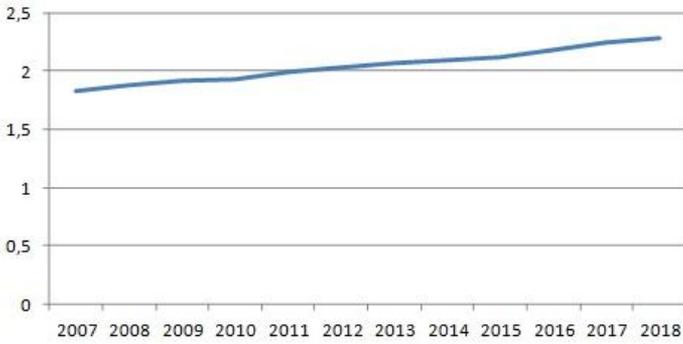


Figure 1. Annual population growth rate

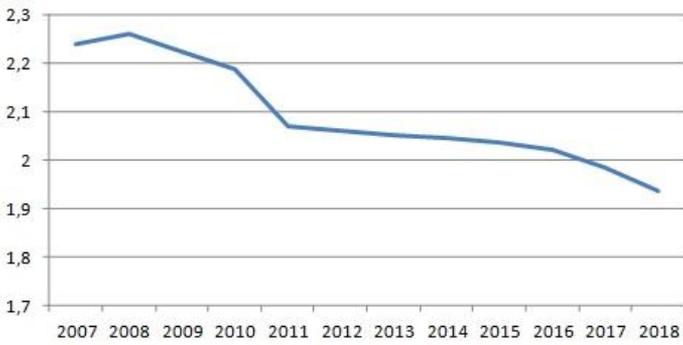


Figure 2. Urban population growth (annual %) global trend

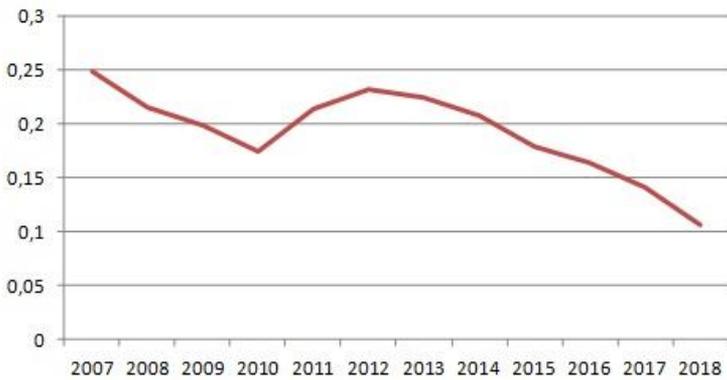


Figure 3. Rural population growth (annual %) global trend

Despite the slowdown in growth worldwide, a positive increase in the rural population is still observed. At the same time, a tendency towards a decrease in the rural population is noted in European countries, as evidenced by negative growth rates (Fig. 4) (WRONKA, 2013; LAUREANO ET AL, 2018; SHUBINA & KULAKLI, 2019).

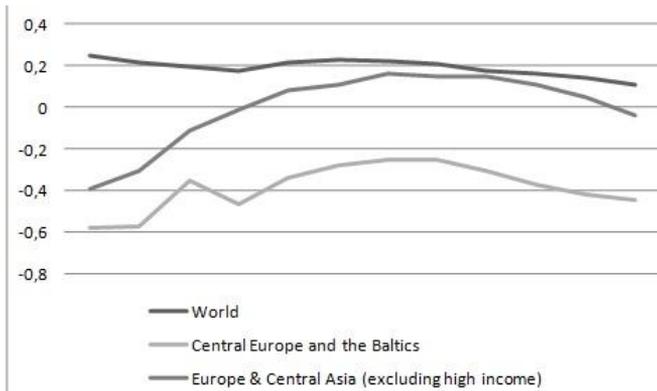


Figure 4. Rural population growth (annual %) – Europe

Currently, the main cause of differences in population growth rates in developed and developing countries is the difference in birth rates. The gap in mortality rates between them is rapidly decreasing. The influence of international migration on population growth in the vast majority of countries remains low (HUMBLE ET AL., 2013). The term “rural population” refers to people living in rural regions, as defined by national statistical offices. It is calculated as the difference between the general population and the urban population. Figure 5 presents a comparison of the percentage of the rural population in different groups of countries:

- Europe and Central Asia, excluding developed countries (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan),
- Countries of the Arab world (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates),
- South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka),

As can be seen from Fig. 5, the largest percentage of the rural population is observed in the countries of South Asia, the smallest - in Latin America (DALEY, 2016).

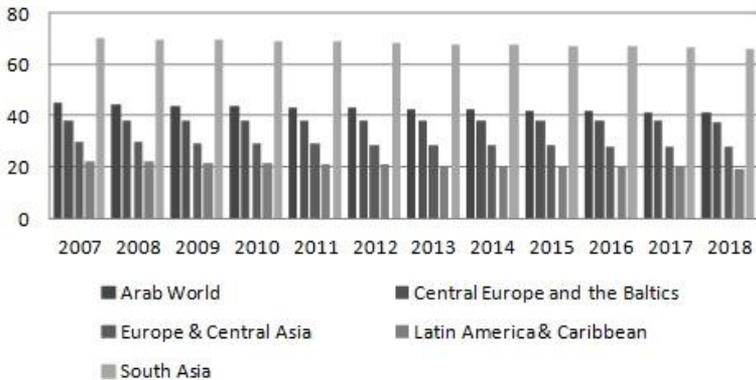


Figure 5. Rural population (% of total population)

In most countries of the world, there is a steady trend towards urbanization. The latter is a natural consequence and stimulus of economic development from passing through the stage of industrialization and

informatization. At the same time, the urbanization rate in developing countries is currently much higher than in developed ones. It should also be noted that in developing countries, where the population is higher, this indicator corresponds to a larger number of people. As a result, the bulk of the world's most populated cities is located in this group of countries.

The rapid growth of cities is observed in almost all countries of the world. Despite this, the levels of urbanization in different geographical regions are not the same. Most Latin American countries are urbanized to the same extent as the countries of Europe. Meanwhile, the countries of South Asia, East Asia and Central Africa remain predominantly agricultural. Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) is determined by the number of people of working age who are engaged in any agricultural activity during the reporting period. The agricultural sector consists of activities in agriculture, hunting, forestry and fisheries. Based on statistics for 2018 (Fig. 6), the percentage of the population employed in agriculture in Europe is significantly lower than in Asian countries. The European indicator is also below the global average (FISHER & GRETTEMBERGER, 2015).

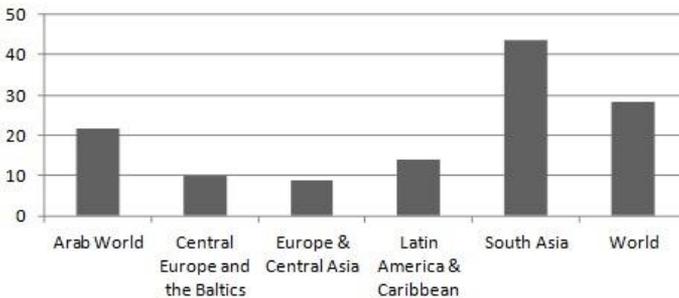


Figure 6. Employment in agriculture (% of total employment)

The level of the rural region development is largely characterized by the access of the population to electricity (Fig. 7). Analysis of statistical data shows that this indicator tends to 100%, which characterizes the permanent improvement of living conditions in the whole world.

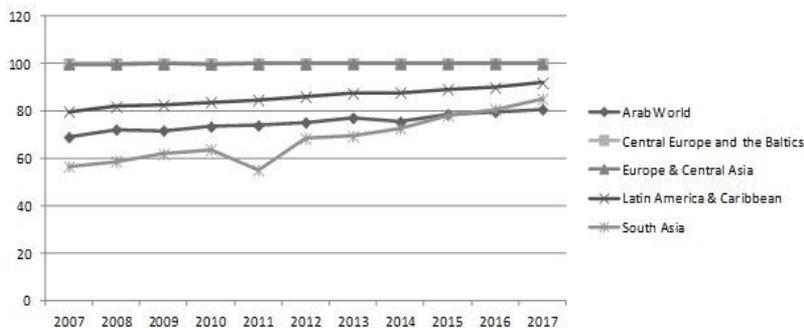


Figure 7. Access to electricity, rural (% of rural population)

The percentage of the rural population practicing defecation in fields, forests, shrubs, ponds or other open spaces for selected groups of countries is shown in Fig. 8. Data is shown only for countries where this indicator is higher than zero. As it can be seen, in many rural regions the level of civilization is quite low, which leads to an increase in infectious diseases and high mortality in this region (SCALES ET AL., 2014).

Integral indicator - Social Progress Index – for selected countries is presented in the following diagrams (figures 9-13). These values are compared with the percentage of the population that uses the Internet. As can be seen from the diagrams below, countries with a low level of economic development have similar values of the social progress index. However, these countries have different Internet access availability.

Europe leads in this direction, which makes it possible to use modern means of communication to intensify social work. The average values of the selected groups of countries are shown in Fig. 14.

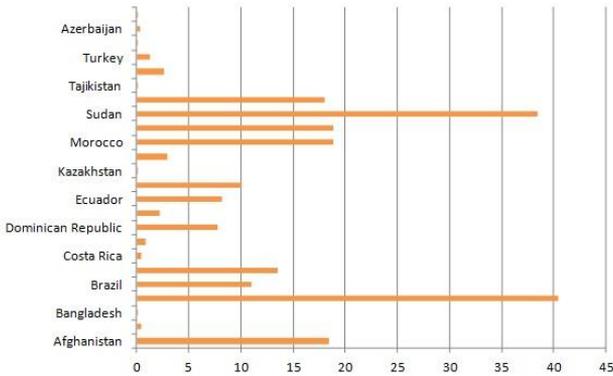


Figure 8. Rural open defecation (% of pop.)

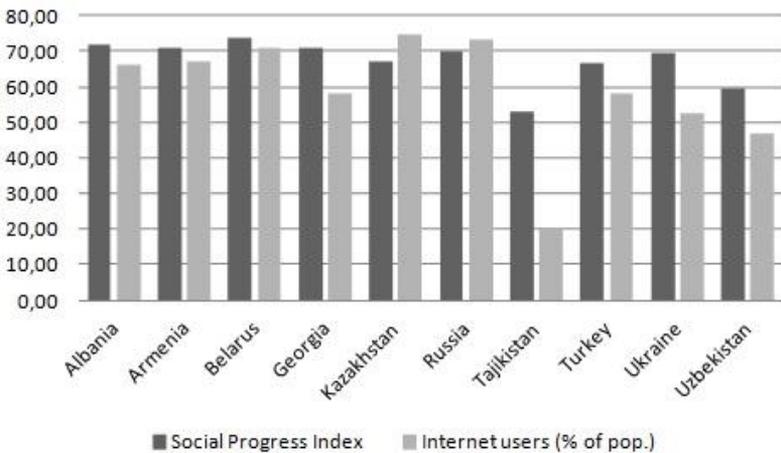


Figure 9. Social Progress Index and Internet users (% of pop.) of countries in Europe and Central Asia, excluding developed countries

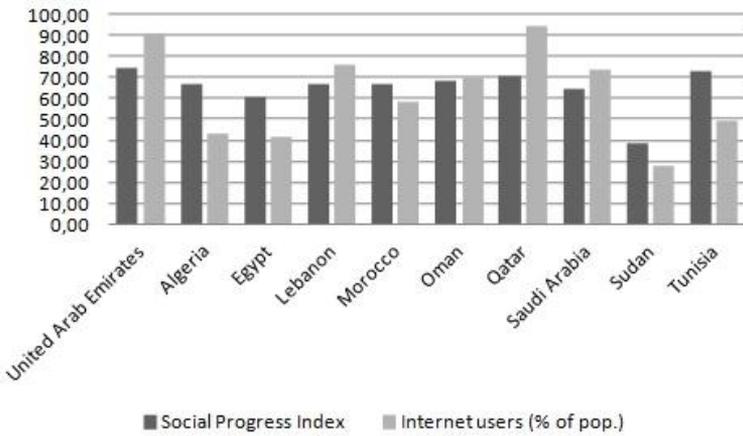


Figure 10. Social Progress Index and Internet users (% of pop.) for the countries of the Arab world

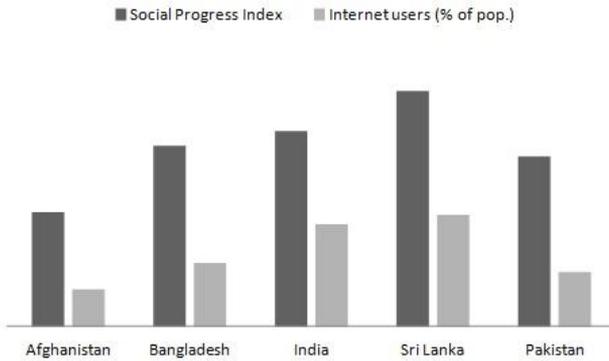


Figure 11. Social Progress Index and Internet users (% of pop.) for South Asian countries

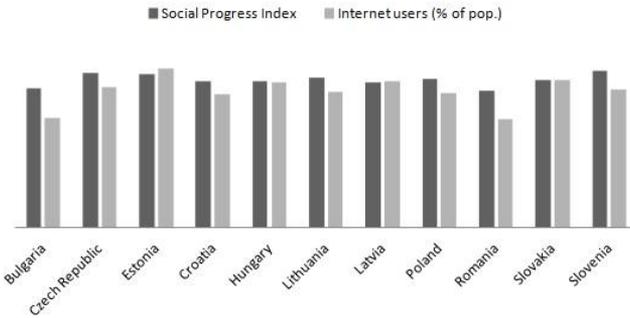


Figure 12. Social Progress Index and Internet users (% of pop.) for the countries of Central Europe and the Baltic countries

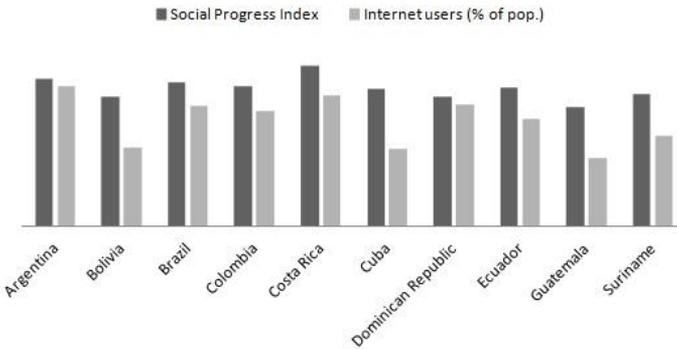


Figure 13. Social Progress Index and Internet users (% of pop.) for the countries of Latin America

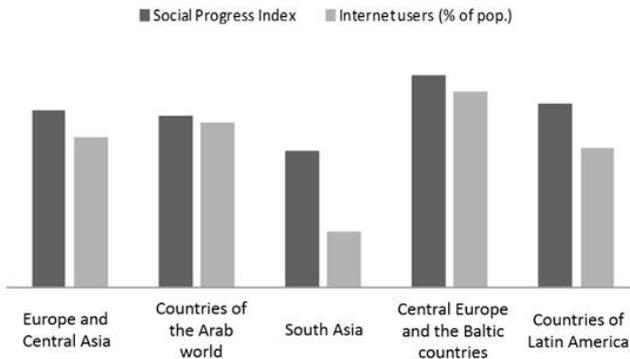


Figure 14. Social Progress Index and Internet users (% of pop.) by groups of countries (average value)

Thus, it can be concluded that the level of social development in the rural region is associated with a large number of factors. Among which the living conditions of the population, respect for human rights, the possibility of communication, as well as the level of culture and education of the population. The analysis shows an acceptable level of social development in Europe and a low level of social development in Asia and Latin America, which generally affects the quality of social work, especially in rural regions.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

Social workers protect their clients by raising their awareness at local, state, and national levels. Some social workers work in a group format, involve public organizations and politicians to develop and improve local social development programs. Social workers who are licensed to diagnose and treat behavioral and emotional disorders are called clinical social workers. They provide individual, group, and family therapy. They work with clients to develop strategies for changing behavior or to cope with difficult situations. They direct clients to other resources or services, such as support groups or other mental health professionals. Clinical social workers might develop treatment plans with the client, doctors, and other health care professionals. Clinical social workers might also adjust the treatment plan, if necessary, based on the progress made by their client.

Child and family social workers protect children and help families in need. They help families find housing or services, such as childcare. They also help families to apply for social benefits, while they intervene when children are at risk of violence. Competent social workers also help

organize adoption, find foster families and create conditions for family reunification. School social workers work with teachers, parents, and school administrators to develop plans and strategies to improve student achievement and social development. Social workers work with students and their families to resolve problems such as aggressive behavior, bullying, or chronic school absenteeism.

Healthcare social workers help patients understand their diagnosis and make the necessary adjustments to their lifestyle. For example, they might help people move from the hospital back to their homes. They also provide information on support group services to help patients cope with their illness. Social workers also provide doctors and other health care professionals with information on the current state of patients in order to create a big picture of the impact of diseases on the mental and emotional health of patients.

Social work in rural regions is facing many changes for both families and social workers. There are many ethical problems in rural regions, which affect the upbringing of children and, therefore, future generations. Herewith, there are critically few specialists who are ready to solve such problems. The lack of social services is the problem that needs to be solved. De facto social workers must be innovative when working in rural regions. Rural communities often have complex and diverse needs. Information and communications technology (ICT) provides a range of potentially innovative and cost-effective means of connection. The latter is vital for connecting rural and remote communities to mental health practitioners, services and support, regardless of their physical location (Bryant et al., 2018). However, despite its potential, ICT today is not widely used in social work practices.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

Social work in rural regions might be determined by the following specifics:

1. Social value orientations, a psychological portrait of a villager. A villager is distinguished by mental conservatism, seriousness, slowness, a tendency to traditions, tolerance, simple living, and a careful attitude to nature. Needs, interests, requests of rural residents, determined by the rural way of life, determine the content of social work, its forms and methods.
2. Social conditions of poor quality of life, work, leisure and, accordingly, the problems generated by these conditions.
3. Peculiarities of the rural social environment, which is characterized by the openness of life of each family, close relationships with neighbors. Traditions of community relations are conserved in rural regions as well. Rural residents are mainly agricultural laborers and they are close to nature.

Moreover, there is a significant number of factors that impedes social work in the rural region. Most rural residents have limited access to such social services as education, healthcare, culture, and social security. Many rural residents do not have developed engineering infrastructure, mainly the elderly residents, who live in remote villages. In rural communities, there is a shortage of professionally trained social workers and social educators, while there is a considerable need for the development of social work in rural areas. The services of psychologists, psychiatrists, addiction medicine physicians, speech pathologists, lawyers are practically inaccessible to most rural residents. In addition, in rural

regions, there are very few functioning social organizations. Today, the main areas of social work in rural regions are:

- On-site consultations on solving legal, psychological and social problems;
- Recreational activities for children and youth;
- Social patronage for children with disabilities;
- Social patronage of the elderly;
- Organization of rural youth employment;
- Conducting educational work on the prevention of negative phenomena among youth;
- Holding charity events.

Online technology is changing social work practices. They form fundamentally new forms of preventive, consultative and representative work (RAMOS, MARTÍNEZ&ANNIA, 2019) . Hence, not only technological, but also ethical issues are raised. Educational institutions for social workers are dealing with new challenges as well.

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