

Assessment and Analysis of the Mountain Areas in Bulgaria and the Tourist Potential in Them

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ABSTRACT

The current exhibition is dedicated to the mountainous regions in Bulgaria. It should be noted that the spatial and social significance of the mountain areas is the basis of the constant public and research interest in the ongoing socio-economic processes, their territorial organization and management. Significant natural, demographic and economic potential mountains require special attention from public authorities and the scientific community. The exhibition presents an analysis of the problems in the definition, typology and characteristics of mountain areas. The peculiarities of the socio-economic development and study of their possibilities for integrated spatial development at regional and local level, as well as the possibilities for their tourist development are outlined. The relevant conclusions and projections on their regional development and management have been made.

KEYWORDS: mountain regions, development, management, territory, tourism, regional development

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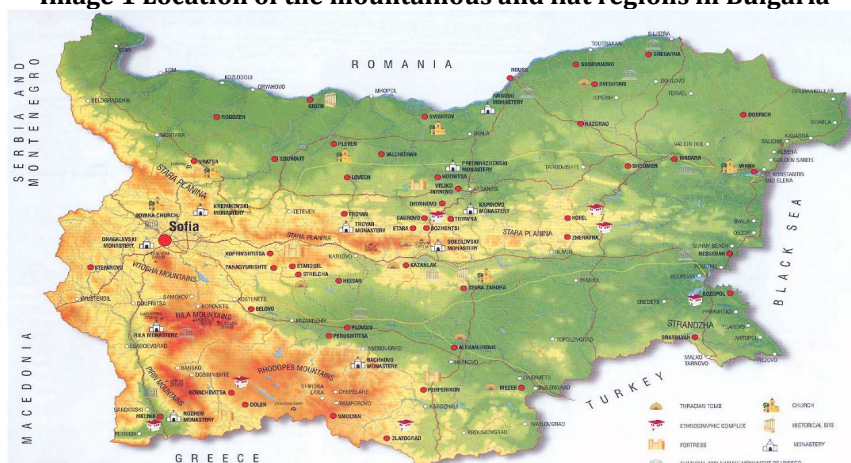


INTRODUCTION

Mountainous areas are part of the territory of the country, which is characterized by certain specifics of living conditions, requiring a special policy for protection, development, structure and management of the territory. On the territory of Bulgaria, the mountainous areas cover 40 264 sq. Km. territory, which represents 36.2% of the country's territory. The specified territorial scope includes 2172 settlements (together with the mountain settlements of the Sofia Municipality), or 41.2% of the settlement network. 82% of the forests are located in these areas. The potential based on the variety of ore and non-ore minerals is

significant. 95.7% of anthracite coal reserves, 89.7% of lead-zinc ores, 76% of copper ores, 74.2% of perlite, 69.5% of dolomite and other minerals are concentrated in mountainous areas [1]. The mountain region is a naturally established permanent demographic and settlement spatial community, developing on the basis of specific local resources, with established cultural and everyday traditions, opportunities for environmentally friendly living, striving to develop integrating modern economy, infrastructure and services [7].

Image 1 Location of the mountainous and flat regions in Bulgaria



Source: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Geography

The same applies to hydro resources, recreational, balneological and other resources. The relative share of the territory, exclusive state property of the total territory of the mountain municipalities ranges from 50 to 80%. The mountainous areas include territories with special regimes - 6 national parks with an area of 271 thousand hectares, 35 protected areas - 8.6 thousand hectares, 134 natural landmarks - 8.8 thousand hectares and 72 reserves - 68.8 thousand. hectares [1]. Mountainous areas are generally characterized by high river network density, high runoff modulus and relatively stable river runoff characteristics. Of these, 81.3% of the total runoff is formed and 70% of the swamped water volume of Bulgaria is concentrated. They are extremely rich in thermo-mineral waters, which are not used enough. Sources with a total flow rate of about 3 cubic meters per second have been discovered, of which no more than half are used. The mountains Rila, Pirin, Western and Central Stara Planina, the Western Rhodopes and the southern part of the Eastern Rhodopes are characterized by favorable characteristics in terms of surface waters. Relative to the western border, Sredna Gora, Strandzha and Sakar. Only Rila and Pirin are rich in lakes - about 280 lakes.

Defining the scope and structure of mountain areas in Bulgaria

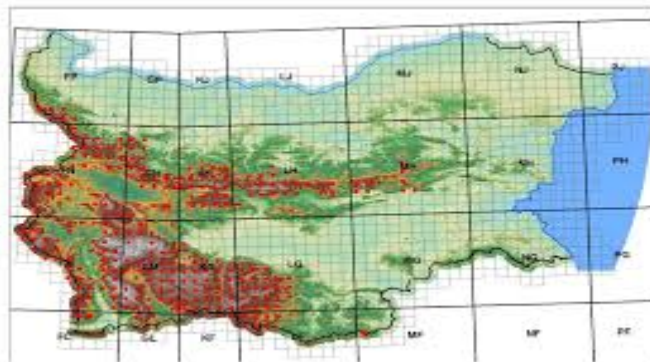
Normative regulation of the criteria, indicators and scope of settlements falling in the mountainous areas in the Republic of Bulgaria - adoption of a system of criteria and indicators for refining the concept of "mountainous region" and a list of settlements falling within the scope of mountainous areas.

In all studied European legislations the main criterion for determining the type of the area is the morphometry of the relief. It is defined by the altitude indicator, with a limit of 600 meters above sea level. In the French legislation, in addition to the indicated altitude, the displacement of the relief is accepted, which between the highest and lowest points should not be less than 400 m. This characteristic must cover more than 80% of the territory of the municipalities in order to be included in mountain areas [3]. Given that the French mountains are compact and the municipalities (communes) are many times smaller in area, these criteria are sufficient for the objective identification of their mountain areas. The main parallel location of the mountains in Bulgaria, the fragmentation of the compact mountain territories and the valleys located between them cannot be covered only by the indicated criteria. For Bulgaria, 3 additional but very important criteria have been adopted: depth of relief dissection, density of dismemberment and terrain slopes. They are applied only in combination with the main criterion - altitude. Depth of relief of the relief, expressing the ratio between the altitudes of the highest and the lowest point per unit area / sq.km./. To determine the mountain character, an indicator with displacement of the terrain with a value of over 200 m was adopted. The difference between the lowest and the highest point per 1 sq. Km. Density of relief of the relief, expressing the degree of incision of the topographic surface. It is measured by the length of the haul net in km. (river valleys, valleys, dry valleys, plains), per unit area - also 1 sq. km. The indicator used according to this criterion has a value of over 2 km / sq. Km. Slope of the terrain, expressing the ratio between the depth and the density of the relief dissection. In determining the mountain areas, the main criterion was "altitude". In cases where the complementary criteria have

unfavorable indicators, their corrective effect on the main criterion is taken into account. According to their quantitative parameters, these indicators have played a significant role in the inclusion of areas below 600 m in the category "mountain" (at high values) or in the exclusion of areas over 600 m from the same category (at low values). The criteria and indicators used to determine settlements and territories with the status of "mountain" are of a static nature, which is a guarantee for a permanent range of mountain areas. Applying the system of criteria and indicators (by using large-scale topographic maps) the mountain settlements in the Republic of Bulgaria are determined, 41.8% of the total number of settlements in the country, and the mountain municipalities (40% of the municipalities).

It is important to note that there is a category of municipalities whose settlement network includes over 50% of settlements with a mountainous character and compactness of the territory [2]. This classification is used in formulating a policy for regional development of certain compact areas. Thus low-mountainous - covering the territories with an altitude of 600 to 1000 m. The object of priority development in this zone are economic activities in the sectors of mountain agriculture and animal husbandry, industrial enterprises for ecologically clean production, tourist activities. Mid-mountain - covers areas with an altitude of 1000 to 1500 m. Objects for priority development are forestry, mountain livestock, tourism. Alpine - covering the territories with altitude over 1500 m -, which are subject to priority protection and limited regime in the use of resources.

Figure 2 Separation of mountain areas in Bulgaria



Source: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Geography

Socio-economic and demographic condition of the mountainous areas

In recent decades, a number of decisions of the Council of Ministers have been adopted, which are a legal attempt to improve certain working and living conditions of part of the population in mountainous areas - mainly on the southern and western borders of the country. Subsidies and other measures granted by the state are mainly aimed at additional payments to the salary, provision of transport from the place of residence to the place of work to administrative privileges for some specialists and others [3]. After Bulgaria's accession to the European Union, the mountainous regions are largely a new center of attraction for regional development. There have been partial successes in attracting investment in light industry, tourism and services. The positive findings for mountain areas is the

contrast of the mountain with the global XXI century. In practice, the Bulgarian mountains are a place where the somewhat authentic tradition of the Bulgarian people has been preserved. Of course, the emerging socio-economic difficulties. Deteriorating infrastructure, lack of implementation of large infrastructure projects and especially demographic deficits. In this direction it is normal to look for opportunities for tourism development in mountainous areas.

Accepting the experts' assessment that the mountain areas have not been in good socio-economic condition for the last 30 years, it is normal to look for new solutions. It is necessary to define in more detail the specifics of the regional features, as well as the distinction of these regions from the rest of the country, with a lasting, permanent objective basis for reducing the socio-economic activity in them.

The demographic picture of the mountainous areas shows that they are characterized by a pronounced dispersed displacement. There are 66 cities located in them, mostly up to 10 thousand people with 49.3% of the population. The villages are twice as small, with an average size of one village of 300 people, compared to 625 people for the plains. The mountainous areas are historically less populated, but in most of them the depopulation has reached drastic proportions. With a total population density of 34 people / sq. Km., In the plains it is about 85, as in Strandzha - Sakar it is only 7, in Kraishtensko - Sofia it is up to 20 d / sq. Km. With the exception of a few small towns in the Fore - Balkans, the Strandzha region is the largest depopulated region in the country, with a very old population including mountainous areas. In most of the mountainous areas, the villages have lost their functions, and the supporting settlement network is represented by several very small towns with limited influence within the municipalities [4].

The employment structure of the population from the mountainous areas largely reflects their economic functions. The leading place of the agricultural sector, forestry and tourism is determined by the relatively high number of employees in these industries - over 40%. The statistical information does not give a real idea of the actual employment in the agricultural sector in the conditions of restitution of agricultural lands. Some of the landowners realize income from self-rent. Their number varies greatly and is statistically difficult to cover. The unemployment rate in the mountainous regions is significantly higher than the national average / about 18 - 20% compared to 13% for the Republic of Bulgaria /. To this is added the seasonal nature of employment (agriculture, forestry, tourism), which significantly affects the income of the population in rural areas.

Infrastructure security of mountain areas

Of particular importance for the normal life and economic functioning of mountain areas is the condition of the individual infrastructure systems: transport, water management, communications and energy. In the predominant part of the transport infrastructure in the mountainous regions there is a satisfactory construction of the road, in comparison with the railway network, due to its easier adaptation to the specific natural conditions. Variation in a large range of the density of the constructed road

network, as a result of which whole regions have been formed, in which it is below the average for the country - the mountains in Southwestern Bulgaria, the Western Rhodopes, Strandzha, Sakar, Western Stara Planina. Significant distance / above the rational minimum / from the built railway network of a large part of the mountainous territories. The most critical in this respect are the Rhodopes, Strandzha and Sakar. Dead-end completion of a large part of the built railway infrastructure, which repeatedly narrows its area of influence. Communications as an element of the technical infrastructure also have specific features related to the quantity and quality of services provided and do not create prerequisites for satisfactory service to the population and business, especially in mountainous and remote from larger cities mountain villages. It could be noted that in general the mountainous areas in the country are characterized by low \ and uneven telephone density (about 2 times lower than the national average).

The repeated increase of the anthropogenic pressure on the natural environment has caused a number of specific ecological problems in the mountainous areas, where there are territories with difficult ecological condition.

Despite the described problems, the mountainous regions in Bulgaria are characterized for the most part by good ecological condition and preserved natural landscape with extremely rich diversity. This implies that, based on the specific natural, economic, demographic, social and infrastructural conditions of mountain areas and in our vertical areas, the systems of incentive and preferential mechanisms for the development of sectors of the economy related to the use of local resources and the protection of the richest biological fund of the country.

The experience of a number of European countries and the conclusions made from the research conducted in our country show that under the new socio - economic conditions the solution of most of the problems of the mountainous regions requires the implementation of a special policy. In this direction, the approach to the mountainous regions should be more precise, because, for example, in the distribution of the land fund - in the mountainous regions the agricultural fund occupies 37.5% against 75.5% in the rest of the country. Even more contrasting is the difference in the forest fund, which here represents 60.7%, and in the rest it is only 19.9%. This shows that there must be an integrated approach to the management of mountain areas in Bulgaria [5].

Such a focus can bring to the fore the development of different types of tourism. In order to realize the need to overcome the negative processes, serious efforts and effective measures are needed, a consistent national policy is needed for their effective protection, use and development. This policy should be aimed at gradually controlling the processes of depopulation, the disappearance of economic functions and traditional activities and the creation of new perspectives for the development of the mountainous parts of Bulgaria.

Opportunities for tourism development in mountainous areas

Regarding the management and utilization of the recreational potential of the mountainous areas, a number of

problems emerge, such as: Exceeding the opportunities for reproduction of natural recreational potential from the capacity of some of the resorts such as "Borovets", "Pamporovo" and others. Permit construction of tourist catering facilities and hotels in inadmissible proximity to protected sites. Underestimation of the aesthetic principles in the construction of tourism sites, as some are not consistent with the landscape silhouette of the territory. Excessive concentration in the resorts of tourist facilities in the service sector / cafes, restaurants, etc./, which during the active season brings them closer to the conditions in the residential areas of large cities and reduces their tourist attractiveness. Insufficient technical infrastructure, especially access to resorts. Inefficient use of some of the geothermal and mineral waters and others. The further utilization of the tourist potential is connected with a new policy in the field of tourism, providing expansion of the tourist product with sustainable use of the resources and the environment[6].

Conclusion

The development of the mountainous regions in the country and the preservation of their identity requires a comprehensive policy that meets the criteria for sustainable development. In this regard, one can think of drafting a special Law on Mountains, which will address issues related to sustainable development and development of mountain areas. With its membership in the European Union, Bulgaria can develop new effective measures to overcome the crisis and for future sustainable development of mountainous areas in Bulgaria. That is why it is necessary to stimulate the economy and strengthen the mountain municipalities. It is necessary to strengthen measures for economic and social support and improvement of the living conditions of the mountain population. Especially for the development of mountain tourism in all its forms in accordance with the natural and ecological balance and sustainability. Reasonable use of land, resources, land and forest is needed. Formation of a reasonable policy for the development of tourism and other new activities in the mountains, carried out jointly, in conjunction and without conflict with the traditional mountain activities of the local population. Preservation of the rich cultural and historical heritage and mountain settlements and showing respect for the traditional way of life of the local population, for the preservation of cultural values, traditions and customs. Mountain development

policy must be an integrated policy that covers economic, social, environmental and development issues and approaches.

It should coordinate and coordinate the diverse interests and rights, to stimulate partnership and agreement between different bodies, institutions and individuals, to promote the achievement of harmony in relationships and harmony between human activities and nature. Therefore, the complex nature of the policy for the development of mountain areas requires the use of a system of mechanisms and regulators in order to overcome the regional differences in these areas of the country.

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