Demographic Aspects of the Regional Economic Inequalities in the Republic of Macedonia

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1. Introduction

The Republic of Macedonia is among the small European countries surfacing a territory of 25,713 km² with population of 2,106,664 citizens. However, there are big regional economic inequalities. The regional economic inequalities are the result of the lack of consistent economic policy for regional development in the last 50 years. The speedy process of industrialization has caused a huge concentration of population in a few urban centers (in Skopje, Bitola, Tetovo and Kumanovo, 50 per cent of the total population of the Republic of Macedonia is concentrated) which leads to emergence of numerous economic and social problems and represents an impediment for the overall economic development of the country.

2. Methodology and Results

According to the new territorial division, the Republic of Macedonia has been divided into 123 municipalities. Such division into a large number of small municipalities makes it unreasonable to plan and predict the future development without prior harmonization of the inter-municipal interests within the higher regional communities.

Using the proposed regionalization of the Republic of Macedonia, according to which, Macedonia is divided into 11 regions which correspond to the NUTS 3 level, the method of I-distance for grouped attributes, economic and socio-demographic, has been applied. The following ranking list has come as a result: 1. Skopje, 2. Bitola, 3. Veles, 4. Prilep, 5. Stip, 6. Strumica, 7. Ohrid, 8. Kochani, 9. Kumanovo, 10. Tetovo and 11. Kichevo.

We consider Skopje and Bitola to be most developed with some 31 per cent of the population of the Republic, whereas the regions of Kochani, Kumanovo, Kichevo and Ohrid, called by the leading municipality among them with some 36 per cent of the total population, are strikingly underdeveloped. The municipalities belonging to the undeveloped regions can be generally divided into two types. The first type of municipalities (Gostivar, Tetovo, Debar, Struga, Kichevo, Kumanovo) are relatively big municipalities with over 50,000 citizens. The following demographic attributes are typical for them:
The second type of municipalities of the undeveloped regions are relatively small municipalities. The following demographic indicators are typical for them:

Table 1. Demographic attributes of the municipalities of the first type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Gostivar</th>
<th>Debar</th>
<th>Kichevo</th>
<th>Kumanovo</th>
<th>Struga</th>
<th>Tetovo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural increase</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of the urban population in the total population</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of young people from 0-17 in the total population</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of minorities of Islamic religion in the total population</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitality Index</td>
<td>367.5</td>
<td>413.2</td>
<td>235.5</td>
<td>242.7</td>
<td>312.0</td>
<td>322.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of students in population</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of students in population</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The conclusion is that certain regions are strikingly underdeveloped, due to, *inter alia*, certain demographic factors which show that there is high correlation with the degree of development. The progressive type of population as well as the regressive one represent a hindrance to the economic development of the Republic. Therefore, stimulating economic measures of the regional policy are recommended in order for the country to overcome the current difficulties.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans la Republique de Macedonie, il y a hétérogénéités regionaux economique significatives. Nous avons rangé des regions par l’intermédiaire de la méthode de la I-ére distance pour les repères economiques et socio-demographiques. A l’égard des aspects demographiques, nous avons separé des regions non-developpées dans deux categories. La premiere categorie embrasse communes avec de population progressiste. La depopulation caracterise la deuxieme categorie de communes.

REFERENCES
