

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC ADVANTAGES OF THE BULGARIAN COASTAL ZONE

Milen PENERLIEV

University Of Shumen, Bulgaria

penerliev@yahoo.com

Abstract

Coastal regions develop under specific conditions, different from those in other territories. People, goods and investments create a complex environment where multiple factors intervene, multiple elements with a life of their own, creating a specific economy that sustains a different standard of living for the local population.

Worldwide, more than 2/3 of the population lives in coastal regions, which extend about 200 km from the coast. This concept, however, has been the subject of several definitions, but these will not be the object of analysis in our paper. We will rather focus on some territorial development trends detected in the Bulgarian coastal regions, which have enabled an undeniable dynamism. We intend to show some of the most important features of their operation, particularly from a demographic point of view.

Key words: Bulgaria, coastal zone, development, indicators

Resumo

As regiões costeiras desenvolvem-se funcionando em condições específicas, distintas das existentes noutros territórios. Pessoas, bens e investimentos, criam uma conjuntura complexa onde intervêm múltiplos factores, múltiplos elementos com vida própria, proporcionando a criação de uma economia específica que fundamenta um padrão de vida diferente para a população local.

No mundo mais de 2/3 da população vive em regiões costeiras, territórios que se estendem até cerca de 200 km da costa. Este conceito, no entanto, tem sido objeto de diversas definições, mas neste artigo não o vamos analisar. Debruçar-nos-emos sobre algumas tendências de desenvolvimento territorial detetadas nas regiões costeiras búlgaras, que têm possibilitado um dinamismo indiscutível. Neste artigo queremos mostrar algumas dessas características mais importantes do seu funcionamento, nomeadamente do ponto de vista demográfico.

Palavras chave: Bulgária, Região costeira, desenvolvimento, indicadores

1. Introduction

The coastal zones develop and function under specific conditions, different from those found in other territories. The interaction of people, goods and investments create a complex environment where multiple elements intervene that have a life of their own, form a specific economy and provide a standard of living for the local population. Worldwide, more than 2/3 of the population lives in coastal zones,

territories which extend inland 200 km from the coast. The definitions for their range are disputed, but we will not examine them in this article.

The development of the Bulgarian coastal areas has followed similar trends. We intend to focus on some of the more relevant characteristics of how they function, particularly from the perspective of the population. The Bulgarian coastal zone is determined by the mutual influence between the sea, the land and people in a territory ranging 200 m seaward (sea border) and a strip of land 60 km wide going inland.

In terms of demography, a comparative analysis shows a better demographic structure in terms of labor resources. For instance, in 1992, the active population in the coastal region was 60%, compared to the average figure in Bulgaria at 56%. The analysis for 2011 shows that the remaining quota residing in the coastal zone but increasing in the national one. This clearly represents a better demographic structure in the coastal zone. And what is more, in 2012, 11,000 children were born in these coastal zones, representing 15.3% of the number of births at national level.

The birth rate has better indexes than those at the national level. This paper analyzed this index on the municipal level in coastal zones. As regards birth rate and mortality we observe some negative trends. The northern seaside in the Shabla municipality has negative demographic indexes. Even compared to the European scale, it has a negative population growth over the years between 15 and 17. This paper attempts to clarify this question. In terms of unemployment, the indexes are better. This is one of the advantages of the coastal zone in comparison to the other regions of Bulgaria.

In 2007 (before the social and economic crisis) unemployment in the country was only 6.9%. In coastal municipalities it was even lower. For instance, in the Burgas municipality, it stood at 1.8%; in the Varna municipality, 2.8%; in the Beloslav municipality, 3.5%; and the Kameno municipality, 2.8%. Among these municipalities Kameno and Beloslav have no sea outlet to the Black Sea but they are part of the coastal region. This clearly shows their favorable geographical location and the influence of the sea basin on territories without sea outlets but economically gravitating around this zone. In 2012, a year still in economic crisis, the average unemployment rate in Bulgaria was 11.1%. In the Burgas municipality, it was 6.4%; the Varna municipality, 5.7%; and the Kameno municipality, 8.7%. These indexes are clearly better than the average for the country.

In terms of macroeconomic indexes, we find a number of advantages. The gross domestic product (GDP) of the coastal zone is higher than other regions, being in fact two times higher. And only the capital and larger cities achieve the levels of the coastal zone. The development of the economy is more favorable because of the so-called sea economy. There are aggregates of economic activities that are typical for coastal zones. These are mainly sea tourism, sea transport and shipbuilding. The Southern European countries enjoy a favorable position with regard to the development of sea tourism. This is why it is a leading sector for Bulgarian coastal regions, yielding the highest profits in national tourism. This paper will examine its role.

The development of economic activities where sea transport is the leading industry also gives advantages to the area we are analyzing. The absence of fossil fuel in the country means petroleum processing is concentrated in the coastal zone because of imported crude. This gives the Burgas municipality a very favorable advantage. The chemical industry, shipbuilding and sea transport are the largest labor employers in the country following the electronics sector. Still, the tourism sector lags behind.

The advantages of coastal zones are not limited to the ones highlighted above. We can mention better infrastructure, as well as greater opportunities for professional realization, aspects this paper will also address regarding the Bulgarian coastal zone, among others.

2. Why do people choose to live near the coast?

The continental coasts are home to 2/3 of the world's population. People migrate to these territories with a hope for a better standard of living and higher incomes. They cover a progressively wider strip of land and the range of the coastal zone increases permanently. In the scientific literature the range of coastal zones is determined by two borders. The first border goes inland up to 50 km from the coastal line and the second one is wider in range, going inland up to 200 km (Table 1).

The table shows a different arrangement of population in continental coastal zones, representing the general trend. In this paper we do not intend to prove the positive effect of the lifestyle in these areas. One indicator can speak to this, which is GDP, the Gross Domestic Product, divided into economic branches. We represent this for several EU countries. As we see that, except for Germany, 50% of all the other countries' economies are based on and depend on maritime activities, which have been created by the people who live in these territories. We can conclude that worldwide almost 2/3 of the population lives in this 200 km inland zone and creates nearly half (sometimes more) of the world's GDP. This means the coastal zones are territories with a perspective, vitality and a huge economic effect. This explains why people are attracted to them.

Table 1- Coastal populations in regions.

Continent	Part of population (%)		
	up to 50 km	50 - 200 km	0 - 200 km
Europe	29.1	25.8	54.9
Asia	27.1	20.2	47.3
Africa	18.1	27.0	47.3
North America	31.5	19.8	51.3
South America	24.4	38.4	62.8
Australia/Oceania	79.0	15.2	94.2
Average			58.0



Fig. 1.- Coastal zone of Bulgaria

Table 2. GDP for the coastal economy of selected EU countries (2012).

Countries in the EU	% of the economic branches in the coastal zone			% of the GDP
	Rural economy	Industry	Tourism	
Great Britain	10	72.2	12.8	49.2
France	4.3	82.0	13.7	45.0
Italy	4.0	84.0	12.0	48.5
Sweden	31.0	32.4	6.6	54.3
Spain	8.6	65.9	25.5	46.8
Finland	32.2	65.6	2.2	52.9
Germany	2.3	86.1	11.6	16.7
Ireland	39.2	50.4	10.4	35.9
Greece	7.6	74.6	17.8	60.6

3. What are the peculiarities of the Bulgarian coastal zone?

The Bulgarian eastern boundary is entirely bordered by the Black Sea, whose coastline is 378 km. As an intercontinental sea it gives numerical limits in terms of transport and “openness” to the world economy which explains the importance of the export branches of the national economy. This determines the smaller range of the Bulgarian coastal zone. It is a land strip including 200 m of the Black Sea coastline and goes inland for 60 km. Like an administrative division, it includes 33 municipalities with 1.5 million people. It accounts for 20.5% of the Bulgarian population. This is comparable to the other countries examined whose inland strip of 50 km has a similar quota for the “maritime” population. As is the case of other similar zones it has its internal regional differences.

When examining the main demographic indicators, there are fundamental differences in the country's average values. For example, the indicator “natural growth” in the areas which have a direct sea outlet have better indexes. The Varna and Dobrich regions have negative natural growth typical for the country. But here it is 2 times more – for the Varna region (- 2.4 ‰) and for the Dobrich region (- 3‰) (Fig. 1). This figure shows also that there are regions in the coastal zone which have worse values for this indicator, such as the Shumen region (- 4.6 ‰) and the Yambol region (- 6.5 ‰). The average value of natural growth in Bulgaria is (-5.2 ‰), a rate which places the country on the table with the worse indicator.

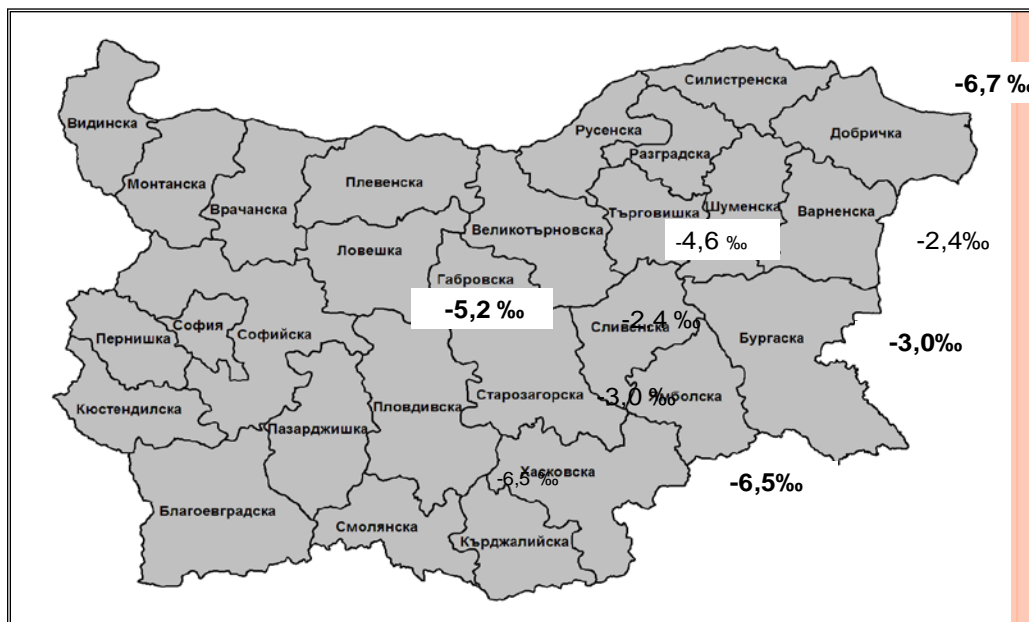


Fig. 2.- Demographic indicators: natural increase, 2013

The birth rate is also an indicator which can give us an idea of the better standard of living in the coastal zone. The higher values show a large proportion of young population, women in fertile age and an obviously better standard of living. The Burgas region has a birth rate higher than 10‰ as compared to the 9.1‰ rate for Bulgaria in 2013 (Fig. 2). The Varna region also has a similarly high rate for this indicator.

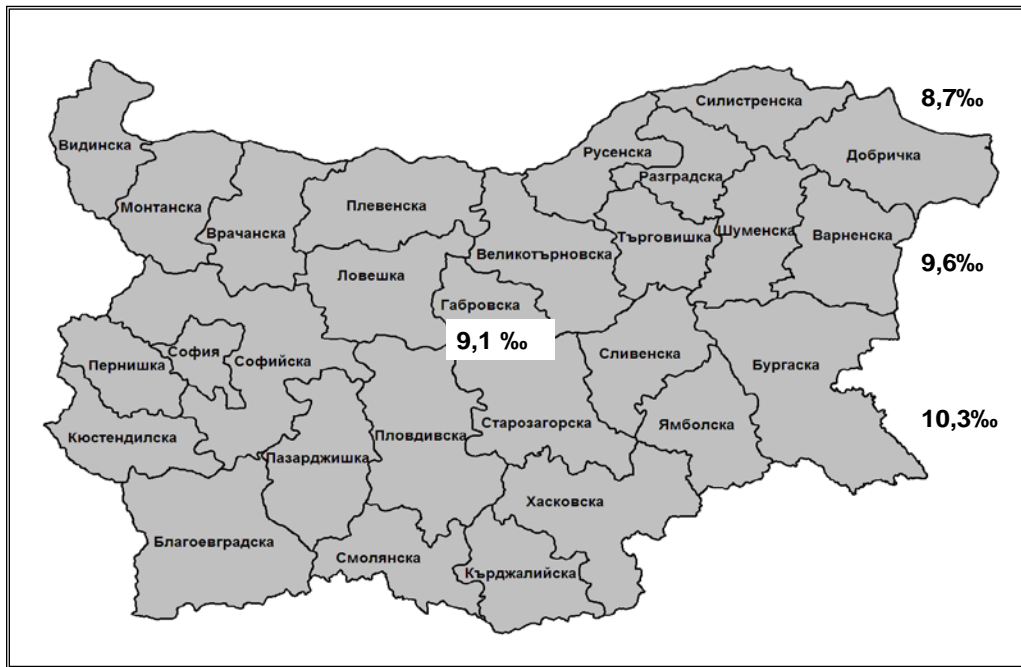


Fig. 3 - Birth rate, 2013

A fundamental indicator which characterizes manpower is unemployment. Its lower value in the coastal zone is indicative of the conditions offered by the maritime economic branches. The higher labor force gives a better appearance for the whole area and the incomes are higher, the social systems are not burdened with relief funds, the productivity of labor increases as does the quota of maritime branches in GDP. The latest data from March 2014 shows the average unemployment rate in Bulgaria was 12.2%. It is much higher than before the economic crisis in 2008, which stood at around 6%. But during the whole period the maritime regions (particularly the municipalities with sea outlets) had better indexes. The Varna and Burgas regions have indexes between 8.4% and 9.8%. These are several points under the average for the country. The Shumen region, located next to the coastal zone, has an unemployment rate of 19.8% (Fig. 3). It is clear that we can conclude that there is an efficiently working maritime economy and better chances for work.

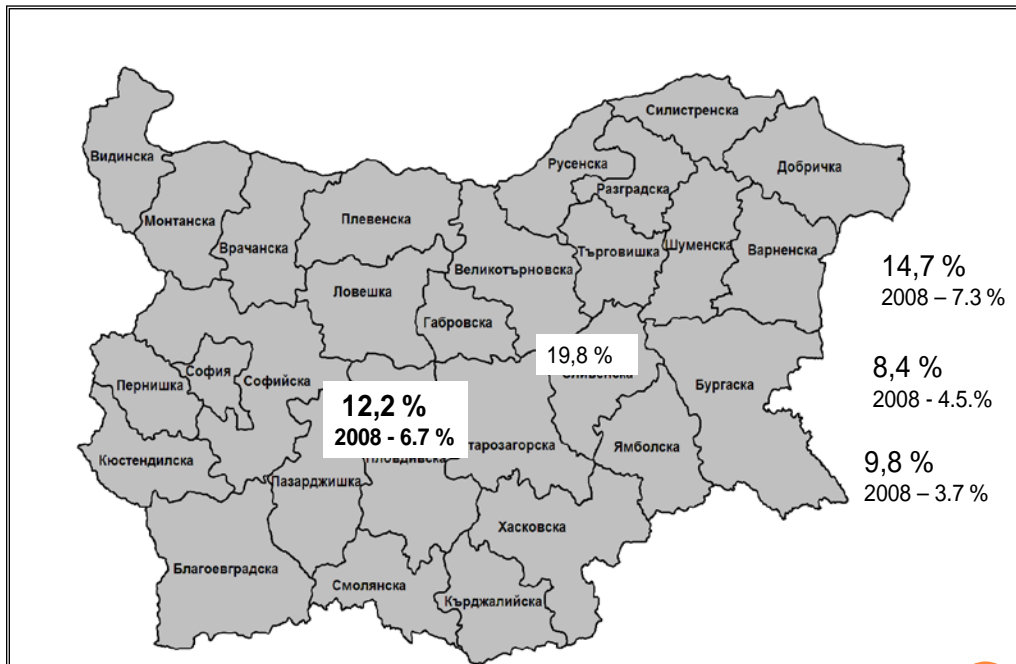


Fig. 4. - Unemployment, March, 2014

One of the main macroeconomic indicators characterizing a territory is GDP. Its analysis on the municipal level in Bulgaria gives different territorial interpretations. It is clear from Figure 5 that the municipalities in the coastal regions have a clearly higher GDP (highlighted in red). Territories around the capital, Sofia, and other larger towns such as Stara Zagora and Veliko Tarnovo, have similar profiles. It is clear that the Bulgarian coastal zone has a better index. This means a higher level of development of the economy and better indexes for the indicators influenced by it – unemployment, labor force, salary, and standard of living.

4. Are there any negative trends in parts of the coastal zone?

The main indicator to determine negative trends is the labor force. The analysis of migration processes in the Bulgarian coastal zone shows some negative trends. For example, 1/3 of the population is concentrated in the largest port towns – Varna and Burgas. This leads to a clear agglomeration effect. The population of Varna is 340,000 people which is nearly 70% of the Varna region. This gives grounds for thought on how to develop other parts of the coastal zone.

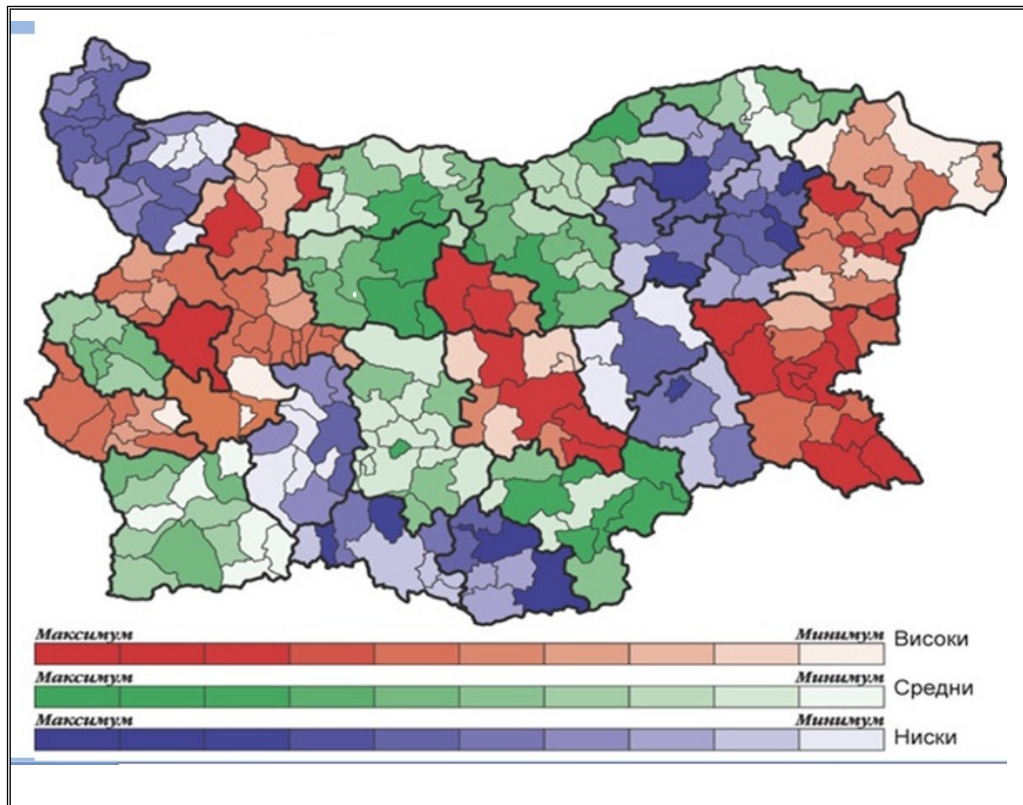


Fig. 5 - GDP, 2012.

If we analyze the above figures we can see some differences in indicators in the Bulgarian coastal zone. Its Northern parts have developed slower and with more negative indicators than the average ones for this territory. The administrative division of the Northern Black Sea coast includes the Kavarna, Balchik and Shabla municipalities. They are part of the Dobrich region, which in 2013, had negative natural growth (- 6.7‰) and its birth rate was lower than the national average, two percentage points lower than the birth rate for the coastal zone (- 8.7‰). Unemployment was over 14% at the beginning of 2014. Furthermore, the Shabla municipality had negative demographic indicators which were one of the highest in the EU (Fig. 5). It is expressed over high natural growth (- 22‰). There were only 39 births in 2013 which is an all-time low. The average annual salary is around 2500 euro.

Despite of favorable influence of the sea, why has this territory not followed similar development trends as the other parts in coastal zone? We consider the main reasons for this are: weakly developed maritime industry (shipbuilding, maritime transport, and tourism), bad road infrastructure, and long isochrones. The isochrones are time – the time to go from point A to point B. When the roads are maintained, the time between these points is shorter. This increases the process of labor migration. The example of the case of the Shabla municipality the working population looks for jobs in Varna. The distance is only 75 km but the travel time is 90 min. Shumen is 90 km away from Varna but the isochrones

are 40 min. This fact limits the locals of Shabla in their search for jobs in nearby industrial towns. This also contributes to worsening the municipality's economic profile.

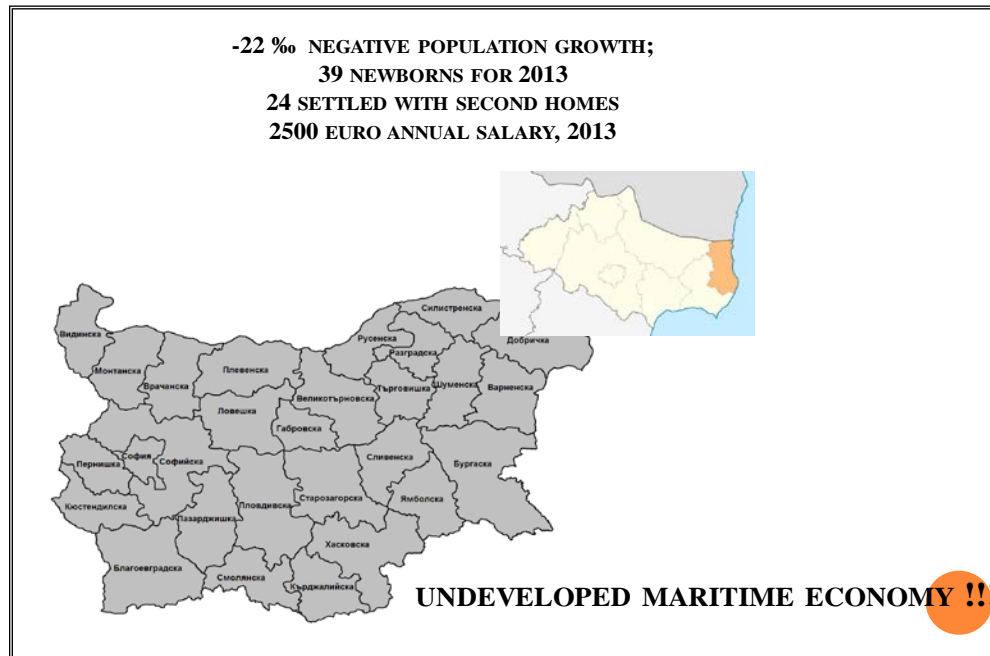


Fig. 6 – Shebla Municipality, 2013.

This paper has only focused on the main trends identified in the Bulgarian coastal zone.

4. Conclusions

The main conclusions drawn about the Bulgarian coastal zone are:

1. It has better demographic and economic indicators than the average at national level;
2. The population is concentrated in the large cities;
3. There are underdeveloped areas;
4. They do not develop the maritime economy and facilitate labor migration.

5. Bibliography

PENERLIEV, M. (2012). Specifika na balgarskata kraibrejna zona, Faber, Veliko Tarnovo;

PENERLIEV, M. (2009). Cherno more – factor za razvitie na balgarskata kraibrejna zona (avtoreferat), Shumen,

Strategia za prostranstveno razvitie na Balgaria, Sofia, 2013

www.nsi.bg

www.grao.bg