

Economics of agriculture
SI – 2
UDK: 338.48-55 (497.113)

RURAL POPULATION – FACTOR OF DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN VOJVODINA

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Abstract

Rural areas in Vojvodina record negative demographic indices that refer to population growth, as well as to age, gender, and educational structure of population. This has negative impact on quantity and quality of human resources, and through them on possibilities of development of tourism in this area. In addition to that, there is also an evident problem of lack of motivation of the population for dealing with this form of tourism. The reasons for insufficient interest of the population should be looked for, primarily, in inadequate education.

Key words: *rural tourism, human potentials, demographic changes, education, motivation.*

Introduction

Nature does represent the main resource for development of rural tourism, but human resources are its main driving engine. Natural attractiveness of rural areas of Vojvodina is a necessary and indispensable condition for development of tourism, although it is not sufficient. The process of development of tourism requires the activation of all available resources, in particular of human resources.

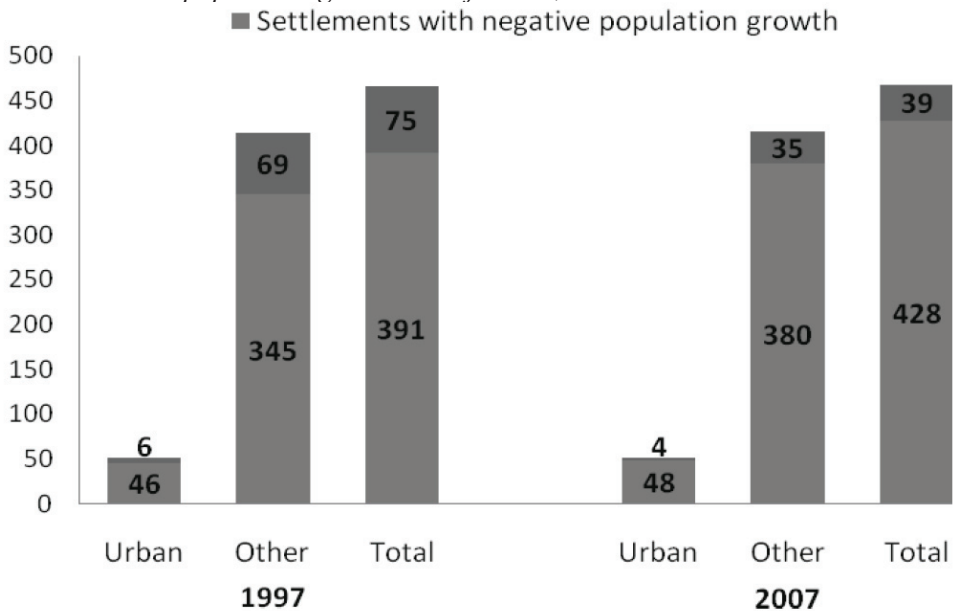
Human resources in the function of development of rural tourism in Vojvodina are **the subject of study in this paper. The objective of the paper** is to propose measures for enhancing of the existing resources in this field. The authors use method of analyses of human resources and comparison of available data in different periods of time. The publications of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia are used as the sources of data.

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Demographic changes and human potentials in Vojvodina

According to the Census from 2002, Vojvodina had 2,031,992 inhabitants who lived in 45 municipalities and 467 settlements, 52 of which are urban and the remaining 415 are rural settlements. Although the data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia point to the trend of slight increase in number of inhabitants in the territory of Vojvodina in the period from 1921 to 2002², rural areas record negative demographic indices. Beside this fact, negative tendencies are also illustrated by the data on the number of settlements in Vojvodina with negative population growth figures³ (figure 1):

Figure 1: Total number of settlements and number of settlements with negative population growth in Vojvodina, in 1997 and 2007



Source: Statistical Yearbook of Serbia 2009, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, adapted by authors

Based on the data presented in the figure 1, it is obvious that a large number of settlements in Vojvodina record a significant demographic loss, namely a larger number of deceased persons compared to the number of live born. The percentage share of

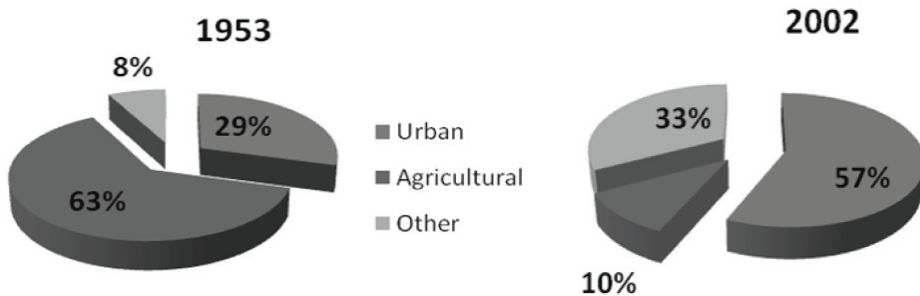
2 Except for the period from 1981 to 1991 when decline in the number of inhabitants was registered, as it was confirmed by the Census from 1991. However, the latest Census from 2002 points to renewed increase that is explained by a large inflow of refugees into the territory of Vojvodina. Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2009.

3 The difference between the number of live born and number of deceased persons.

other (rural) settlements with negative population growth accounted for 83.3% in 1997 and 91.6% in 2007.

Based on the available statistical data⁴ for the period from 1991 to 2002, it can be concluded that a significant number of other (rural) settlements in Vojvodina recorded a decline in number of inhabitants (260 out of 415 settlements, which makes 62.7%). This phenomenon is less expressed in urban settlements. Moreover, a significant number of urban settlements recorded increase in number of inhabitants (31 out of 52 settlements in total, which makes 59.6%). Statistical data show that significant changes in the structure of population happened in Vojvodina in the second half of the 20th century through internal migration streams leading from rural to urban settlements. For example, according to the data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the share of urban population in Vojvodina was 29.5% in 1953, while it reached 56.7% in 2002 (figure 2).

Figure 2. Share of urban and agricultural population in the total number of inhabitants of Vojvodina, in 1953 and 2002



Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Serbia 2009*, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, adapted by authors

Contrary to urban population, the share of which in the total population increases year in year out, the share of agricultural population records constant decline. Such trends are the consequence of industrialisation and urbanisation that have been in progress after the World War II. The share of agricultural population in Vojvodina accounted for 62.9% while in 1953 it accounted for only 10.6%. The consequence of such population policy is that “people do not have what to do and where to live in towns and cities today, while there are no people who would and settle in villages“.⁵

The insight into the situation with human potentials in Vojvodina is not possible to acquire without the analysis of the population structure, referring to age, gender, and educational structure.

4 Statistical Yearbook of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2009.

5 Tomic, D. (2008): “The future of rural areas in Serbia- and the world to me”, Agriculture and rural areas, Belgrade, p. 65

Table 1: Age and gender population structure in Vojvodina, 2002

Age in years	No. of inhabit.	% of share	Male	% of share in the total male population	Female	% of share in the total female population
Under 15	322214	15.86	165337	16.79	156877	14.98
From 15 to 64	1386031	68.21	689589	70.01	696442	66.51
65 and older	315185	15.51	125964	12.79	189221	18.07
Unknown	8562	0.42	4052	0.41	4510	0.43
Total:	2031992	100	984942	100	1047050	100

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Serbia 2009, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia*

According to the data presented in table 1, it can be seen that the largest share in the structure belongs to the population aged from 15 to 64 (68.21%). The share of population aged under 15, as well as of population aged 65 and over makes 15%. However, the fact that the share of population older than 65 rises in rural areas of Vojvodina raises concern. The recent researches show that the least favourable situation is in municipalities of Nova Crnja, Alibunar, Secanj, Zitiste, and Plandiste.⁶ Those data show that neither Vojvodina nor Serbia⁷ are exempted from the process of population ageing, which commenced in Europe long time ago, in particular new EU Member States EU (10+2)⁸. Those negative changes in age structure of the population do not contribute to the development of rural tourism since younger and middle-aged population represent the future of development in this field.

The analysis of gender structure of the population is not less significant than the age structure, having in mind that rural tourism represents the activity within which the female workforce is very important. Therefore, more significant share of the female population belonging to the age group from 15 to 64 represents a good basis for the development of rural tourism. According to the data for 2002, the share of this age group of the female population in the total female population was 66.51%, and it the

6 Njegovan, Z., Pejanovic, R. (2009): "Rural reorganization of Vojvodina", University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Agriculture, p. 140.

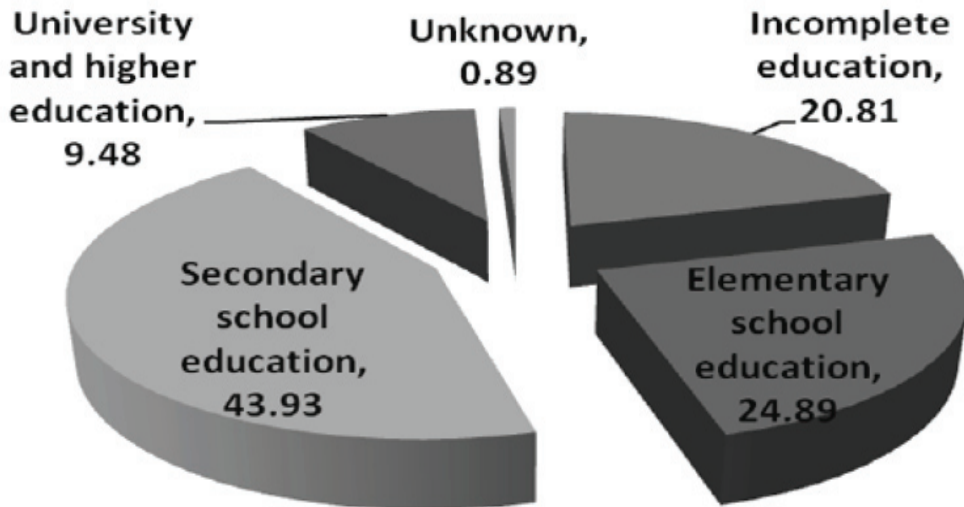
7 This is confirmed by data on average age of the population and ageing index of population of Serbia (the ratio between old (60+) and young (0-19) population): average age in 1953 was 29.4 years and ageing index was 24.1%, while in 2007 the registered average age of the population was 40.9 years and ageing index was 103.2%.

8 Csaki, C., Jambor, A. (2010): After the First Five Years: The Diversity of Effects of EU Membership on Agriculture in New Member States, chapter in monograph: Agriculture in Late Transition: Experience of Serbia, DAES, Belgrade, p. 37.

total population of Vojvodina it was 34.27% (data from the Table 1).

In addition to the above-mentioned, it is also important to analyse the educational structure of the population since it represents a significant quality indicator of human resources (figure 3).

Figure 3: Educational structure of the population older than 15 in Vojvodina, 2002



Source: Statistical Yearbook of Serbia 2009, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, adapted by authors

The survey of data from the figure above shows that the largest share belongs to the population with secondary school education (43.93%), while the share of the population with elementary school education accounts for 24.89%. The share of the population with university and higher school accounts for 9.48%. However, there is a significant number of inhabitants of Vojvodina with incomplete education (355,766 inhabitants, or 20.81%).

In rural municipalities of Vojvodina, there is a lower share of educated population compared to urban municipalities. Recent researches show that Zrenjanin and Vrbas are rural municipalities in Vojvodina with the most favourable education structure, while the situation in municipalities of Zitiste, Kovacica, Alibunar, and Bac is the least favourable.⁹ The unfavourable educational structure in rural areas is most often explained with the impact of factors such as leaving of young people to urban centres, unfavourable age structure, limited education opportunities, etc. This phenomenon cannot be evaluated positively and it should be paid more attention in the future.

Positive changes in all of the population structures of Vojvodina analysed above

⁹ Njegovan, Z., Pejanovic, R. (2009); "Rural reorganization of Vojvodina", University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Agriculture, p. 145.

could undoubtedly stimulate the development of rural tourism in the future. However, the data that only 7 out of 415 rural settlements in total have developed some forms of rural tourism points to another limiting factor – *lack of motivation* of the population.

Motivation and education in the process of human resources activating

Motivation is of crucial significance in the process of activating of the rural population. Higher motivation and higher quality education of the population would eliminate one of the main barriers in the development of rural tourism. It is of exceptional significance in that complex process to identify primarily the factors that can affect higher motivation of the population. Education of the population singles out as one of the most significant. Specialised references often mention the significance of education as one of the key factors of further development of rural tourism.¹⁰

Education of the population should represent the basis of all the activities related to human resources as factors of development of rural tourism. Absence of interest and insufficient level of skill among the population are largely conditioned by their insufficient education.¹¹ That is why it is necessary to ensure that all interested households have access to appropriate education and training, knowledge and skills that are necessary for providing of satisfactory quality of services in rural tourism. *Education should offer the replies to the questions such as: How to start up, manage and develop rural “business“? Answers are important because the determinant factors of the tourist competitiveness of each region are the development and operation of the management system with the effective, suitable competences and calculable financing and organisational background.*¹²

The contents of education should include the following topics:

- *Potential positive effects*
- *Possibilities for obtaining of initial funds*
- *Rural “business“ management*
- *Preservation and development of rural areas and the environment.*

In this phase of development of rural tourism in Vojvodina, which means at its very beginning, the benefits from dealing with this industry are not visible. This fact aggravates significantly the process of motivating the population. That is why it is necessary, in particular in this stage, to *educate the population about potential positive effects* that can be expected from rural tourism. The emphasis within the education

10 Todorovic M., Stetic S. (2009): “Rural Tourism“, University of belgrade, Faculty of Geography, Belgrade.

11 Bošković Tatjana, Andrić, Nataša, Tomić, D. (2010): „The human and financial resources- factors in rural tourism in Vojvodina“, Scientific Symposium „The village and tourism in Vojvodina“, 03 and 04 June 2010 Velika Plana (oral presentation)

12 David, L., Anett Tozser (2009): Destination management in Hungarian tourism, Applied Studies in Agribusiness and Commerce – APSTRACT, Agroinform Publishing House, Budapest, Vol. 3, Numbers 5-6, p. 82.

process should be placed on some of the most significant effects that could have the effect of driving engines when it comes to rural population. Having in mind a difficult economic position of the population in this region, the possibility to accomplish supplementary revenues with the minimum investments is the effect that should be emphasised. The significance of expanding of this activity onto peripheral areas based on inter-dependence of agriculture and tourism should be advocated intensively.

In addition to getting acquainted with potential benefits from the development of rural tourism, it is also very important to get informed about different *possibilities for obtaining of initial funds*. Despite the fact that rural tourism provides possibilities of generating additional revenues with the minimum investments, due to a difficult economic status of the population the initial funds are often insurmountable obstacles for many interested individuals. It is necessary to inform them about the institutions that grant funds for such purposes, as well as about the latest competitions for fund granting. It is also necessary to provide all practical assistance related to preparation of documentation that is to be submitted along with the applications for competitions.

When it comes to *financial support provided by the state*, it should be pointed out that since 2006 the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management has allocated funds for renovation of traditional rural households, as well as for promotional and educational activities.¹³ Out of the total amount of funds that were spent in Vojvodina, 84.36% were invested into renovation of traditional rural households and 15.64% in promotional and educational activities. Based on previous researches¹⁴ it can be seen that during a three-year period the amount of funds that were spent is smaller compared to the funds that were approved for those purposes. The reasons could be found in inadequate information, as well as in unprofessional preparation of tender documentation.

Successful *rural "business" management* requires serious approach and application of knowledge and skills in different fields. The offer has to be attractive in order to attract tourists from the country and from abroad. It has to be taken into account that rural tourist is simultaneously an active tourist, namely hobbyist¹⁵ who demand quality in terms of accommodation, meals and offered contents. It is very important that future entrepreneurs in rural tourism obtain primarily all necessary skills and knowledge through training (in the fields of management, marketing, etc.) related to fulfilment of

13 In the period from 2006 to 2008 the total amount of 91,580,215 RSD was allocated and spent for those purposes, 12,164,271 RSD of which, or 13.3%, were allocated and spent in Vojvodina.

14 Boškovic Tatjana, Andric Natasa, Tomic, D. (2010): "The human and financial resources – factors in rural tourism in Vojvodina", Scientific Symposium „the village and tourism“, 03. i 04. June 2010. Velika Plana (oral presentation).

15 Andric Natasa, Tomic, D., Tomic Gordana (2010): Status and Perspectives of Development of Rural Tourism in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, 118th EAAE Seminar "Rural development: governance, policy design and delivery", Ljubljana, 25-27 August 2010, p. 614

“administrative“ part of their business as well as knowledge that will help them in setting up of good communication and relations with their guests. The latter are considered as those of the highest significance in tourism industry and those that a long-term survival and development of rural “business“ depends on up to a large extent.

In the end, it is very important to emphasise the significance of *preservation and development of rural areas and the environment*. The attractiveness of rural areas for development of tourism is reflected in preserved environment and rural heritage and culture. Natural resources are the basis for development of rural, as well as all other forms of tourism. Only clean and unpolluted environment can be the basis for successful dealing with tourism. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a high level of ecological awareness and invest efforts in obtaining the support and assistance from the local population in environmental protection activities.

Taking into account the conclusion of the International Conference that was held in Riga, which states that obstacles in training of entrepreneurs in rural tourism include primarily the lack of time and motivation, and taking into consideration the conditions and way of life of rural population in Vojvodina, education should be carried out:

- *“From village to village“*
- *Completely free of charge*
- *During the periods that are not the season for agricultural works*
- *In a professional way.*

The objective of such education method is to provide *high quality knowledge (training) with the minimum of time and investments* by the future entrepreneurs in rural tourism.

Conclusion

Human potentials, although being significant, are not a driving engine, but rather the barrier in the development of rural tourism in the territory of Vojvodina. Therefore, a special attention should be paid in the future to enhancing of human resources. Education of all the participants in the process of development of rural tourism should be a significant part of those activities. The education programme should include rural households that participate directly in creating and providing of tourist products and local communities as indirect participants. The future development of this industry will depend on the support of the state, which has to be much stronger and active than it has been the case until now.

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