

Plamen Patarchanov

Assoc. Prof. Dr.

Faculty of Geology and
Geography, Sofia University "
St. Kliment Ohridski"

e-mail: p_patarchanov@abv.bg

ORCID:

[https://orcid.org/0000-0003-
2494-3217](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2494-3217)

Published First Online:

19.12.2023

Pages: 318-328

DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.37075/JOMS
A.2023.2.14](https://doi.org/10.37075/JOMS
A.2023.2.14)

SPATIAL-GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF THE DEVELOPED REGION "KRAISHTE" IN THE WESTERN PARTS OF BULGARIA

ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to a particular region in our country, the Craište. It is a region located in Pernik, Kyustendil and Sofia districts. The region has its important strategic importance as a bridgehead to the capital. The presentation gives a brief historical overview of the chronology of the development of the region and its socio-economic, ethnographic and geographical development. The main economic indicators related to the emerging serious barrier to the economic development of the municipalities of the cross-border region is the low labour productivity and the extremely low cost of labour. The specific features of agriculture and forestry, extractive industries and industrial profile, services and tourism are highlighted. The analysis carried out has its spatial patterns.

KEYWORDS: Territory, space, development, governance, region, placeholder, forecasting

JEL: O18, R00, R50

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, territory management is related to the effective development of individual local territories. Thus, the region as a natural and historical-geographical area is of significant scientific interest for a number of our and foreign researchers. The spatial identification and anthropogeographic characteristics of the "Kraishte" region is the subject of serious research by the prominent Bulgarian pedagogue, geographer, ethnographer, historian and folklorist - art. cor. Jordan Zahariev. For more than half a century, he conducted a cycle of surveys of the Kyustendil region, covering 159 villages and Kyustendil. In practice, however, "Kraishteto" covers a larger territory. The positioning of Kraishte region as peripheral to the country's capital gives it the opportunity to develop as a secondary spatial zone of European importance in space by creating opportunities to promote regional economic development. The purpose of the article is to bring out new challenges for the development and functional characteristics of the "Kraishte". This will allow us to assess the quality level and characteristic of the structural parameters of the area. On a European scale, "Kraishte" is a physical-geographical and historical-geographical area in Western Bulgaria and Eastern Serbia, and a very small part (the most southwestern) falls on the territory of North Macedonia. Their main direction of extension is from northwest to southeast. On Serbian territory, it includes the mountains Tumlashka (highest peak Bele Vode or Golemi vrah, 1832 m), Gramada (1719 m), Chemeritsa (Chemernik, 1638 m), Vardenik (highest peak Veliki Stresher 1875 m), Musul (peak Besna kobila 1922 m,

the highest point of the entire region), Doganitsa (1829 m), Dukat (highest peak Cernook, 1881 m) and Strazha (1547 m) and numerous valley extensions and hollows - Vlasinska, Bosilegradska, etc. The region can be divided into five physical-geographical (landscape) sub-regions. They represent well-defined mountain ranges or valley strips. From north to south the following sub-districts are traced: Trnsko-Pernishka, Ruysko-Verilska, Divlyansko-Radomirska, Milevsko-Konyavska and Kamenishko-Dupnishka.

EXPOSITION

There is accumulated historical material for the "Kraishte" region in the direction of its anthropogeography, ethnography, folklore, sociology and dialectology. A predominant place in his researches is related to everyday life and the language of the population, as oral folklore is increasingly being forgotten and vernacular is rapidly losing its distinctive local features. The book "Kyustendil Region" is the first settlement study in Bulgaria. His other major works are: "Guide to Anthropogeographical Research in Bulgaria" (1928), "Slokastitsa Village" (1935), "Piyanets" (1938), "Kyustendil. Contribution to Settlement and Geographical Studies of our cities" (1938), "Kyustendil Basin" (1963), numerous articles, etc. Regarding the region of "Kraishteto", it is necessary to point out its importance in terms of its regional development in order to determine the possibilities for regional development of the settlements in it. Another important feature is to introduce a certain type of regional policies in the conditions of new spatial development of the regions in Southwestern Bulgaria.

Yordan Zahariev (1918) introduced the term "Kyustendilsko Kraishte" to designate the part of the vast historical-geographical region of Kraishte, stretching northwest from Kyustendil and enclosed between Radomirska County on the east, Trunska County on the north, the Serbo-Bulgarian border (until 1919) on the west and Kyustendilska County (within its borders until 1901) on the south. For the boundaries of Kyustendil Krajishte, Yordan Zahariev assumed the administrative boundary of Krajishte Nahya (until 1878, and after the Liberation - Bosilegrad District), with the 62 villages included in it.

The Western Region of Bulgaria now includes:

Kyustendil Region :

- Goranovtsi, Gorno Uyno, Poletintsi, Polska Skakavitsa, Regizintsi - commonly. Kyustendil;
- Brest, Bazovitsa, Gabreshvtsi, Gorni Koriten, Gorno Kobile, Dobri Dol, Dolni Koriten, Dolno Kobile, Dragoichintsi, Zlogosh, Kiselitsa, Kosovo, Metohija, Pobit Kamen, Sredorek, Sushitsa, Treklyano, Ushi, Cheshlyantsi - commonly. Treklyano;

Trnsko Krajishte:

Vidrar, Gorna Melna, Gorochevtsi, Dokyovtsi, Dolna Melna, Dalga Luka, Kushle, Leva Reka, Penkyovtsi and Shipkovitsa - commonly. Trun;

Zemensko Krajishte:

Vranja Stena, Gorna Vrabcha, Gorna Glogovitsa, Divlja, Dolna Vrabcha, Kalotintsi, Odranitsa, Peshtera, Rayantsi and Smirov dol - commonly. Zemen.

The economies of the municipalities in the study area today are characterised by serious structural problems. The deep political transformation and the transition from a planned to a market economy have determined the current shape of local economies. There is a need for a high level of activity by the public authorities to attract investment for new economic activities in order to achieve sustainable employment of the workforce and diversification of municipal farms (Zahariev. I.1918). Indicative of the economic profile of the study area is the fact that

most municipalities are part of the scope of the targeted support areas. They are the territorial basis for the concentration of resources in order to reduce intra-regional disparities in the degree of development of individual administrative-territorial communities and to achieve the objectives of the state policy for regional development. The municipalities of Treklyano, Trun and Zemen, as a whole or individual settlements thereof, are defined as backward regions in all three types - rural, mountainous and border regions, respectively. The characteristics defining the economic image and development of the target region are:

- predominantly monostructural economy with low adaptability, without the regional centre Kyustendil;
- a high share of the agricultural sector due to insufficient development of other alternative economic activities, especially in the smaller municipalities of the study region;
- Extensive agriculture with a low degree of mechanisation and efficiency of individual production;
- fragmentation of land ownership, determined by the specific terrain of most of the region;
- closure of structurally defining enterprises and industries in the transition years and unsuccessful privatisation of a significant part of the economic entities.

The sectoral and territorial structure of the region's economy is inhomogeneous, and characterised by serious structural and intra-regional disparities. The economic shape of the region's municipalities is determined by their specialisation in the following major industries and industries:

1. Kyustendil - textile, clothing and food industry; footwear production; machine building; tourism and trade.
2. Treklyano - logging; extensive crop and livestock farming.
3. Trun - timber; engineering and tourism.
4. Zemen - mining and production of building materials; extensive crop and livestock production; forestry; food industry.

Starting from one of the basic principles of regional and local development, which is to reduce disparities, it should be noted that it is necessary to create preconditions for stimulating the economy in the cross-border region and increasing the GDP growth rate. This is especially true for the small rural municipalities in the study area, such as Treklyano.

Characteristic of local municipal economies is the very limited number of employers, which determines an insufficient supply of jobs on the labour market. Overcoming these negative tendencies requires a complex approach and the involvement of the capacity of the responsible state institutions through the development of specific programmes and measures, and their joint creation must be carried out with the active participation and support of both non-governmental organisations and scientific units, as well as supranational and EU structures.

Increasing the competitiveness of the local economy, economic sectors and individual business units is a prerequisite for achieving economic growth and leads to higher incomes and improved living standards for the population of the study region. The competitiveness of municipal economies is of paramount importance in overcoming the increasing external pressures following our accession to the EU. On the other hand, competitiveness reflects the potential to achieve high productivity based on an innovative approach to human resources, capital and physical assets.

In recent years, some competitive advantages that played a significant role at the beginning of the transition, such as low-paid labour, relatively cheap electricity, and availability of raw

materials, have become less important. Higher-ranking advantages - the ability to develop high-technology industries, to produce and export goods with a higher degree of processing and intellectual content - have become increasingly important. One of the main problems of the local economy in the transition period is related to the low technological level of the functioning economic entities. The problem of innovation activity of companies is relevant because it is a necessary tool for the survival and development of both private and public sector enterprises. At the same time, it is a necessary condition for their transformation into competitive market structures. This is even more true for enterprises doing business on the territory of relatively small municipalities in the region, such as Treklyano, Zemen and Tran (Zahariev. I.1928). A serious barrier to the economic development of the municipalities in the cross-border region is the low labour productivity and the extremely low cost of labour. Because of this, entrepreneurs are not motivated to be innovative and to implement new technological solutions in the main economic activities. The lack of sufficient private financial resources for research and development, the low innovation capacity of businesses and the low level of use of information and communication technologies, as well as the absence of a targeted company policy for the development of human resources, highlight very clearly the negative trends in the development of the region's economy.

Adequate measures are required, involving all stakeholders, especially the state and especially the local authorities, which should actively cooperate with organisations supporting business and entrepreneurship. All of them can become a key resource for the growth of economic activity by increasing the managerial culture of entrepreneurs and the competitiveness of individual business units in the regional economy. They can help to overcome the problem of little or no experience and knowledge in marketing, difficulties in accessing credit financing, lack of information and support in carrying out especially export operations, etc.

The stagnation characteristic of some of the periods of ongoing transition is again very much in force, as a result of the serious regional economic imbalances accumulated over the years, reinforced today by the local influences of the economic crisis. The resulting sharp decline in both foreign and domestic investment in the region has had a negative cumulative effect on the already limited business environment, basic infrastructure and quality of human resources. Ultimately, this determines the decreasing degree of investment attractiveness of the region's territory (Opportunity for cross-border, 2005)

SECTOR SPECIFICS.

1. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY.

By its nature, agriculture remains a high-risk economic activity in the cross-border region. This, combined with the low profitability, partly due to the predominantly small size of the economic units (most of them are of the so-called semi-market type), has a disincentive effect on the sustainable development of this type of activity. The future market strength of farms in the region will depend on overcoming the problem of reluctance to cooperate. By joining together in producer organisations, these economic operators can find more opportunities to market their produce. This is also tolerated by the new agricultural policy of the EU, and Bulgaria in particular, in order to effectively counteract the growing competitive threats on the internal market for agricultural products as a result of its active opening.

An advantage and opportunity for farmers in the region, but also a risk to some extent, is the development of organic production, based on the preserved geographical environment, which is a priority worldwide due to the massive penetration of genetically modified organisms in a significant part of agricultural food. However, the transition from conventional to organic farming involves the need for significant investment, which producers in the region do not have.

The solution lies in the active participation and, above all, effective use of funds from the various external donor programmes of the EU and other organisations supporting this type of agriculture (National Plan...2006)

With the largest share of usable agricultural area is commonly. Kyustendil, where more than 70% of them are concentrated, the result of the larger share of the basin areas and its significant total area (959,4 sq.km), which makes it the largest in the whole region. The limited total area and the prevailing, albeit low-mountain topography limit the arable agricultural land in the municipalities of Treklyano, Zemen and Trun. The fact that almost 30% of the arable land is unused is of serious concern, which clearly shows the disinterest of both local and external investors to develop agricultural production.

The continuing division of hereditary estates is leading to a reduction in the average size of estates, and this cannot be compensated for by too little land consolidation through exchanges and purchases. The reason for this is that the agricultural land market in the region, as in the whole country, is not developed. Underdeveloped tenancy relations also hinder the natural consolidation of agricultural land.

The crop specialization of farms has largely maintained its profile of the last decades of the twentieth century, but with a strong contraction of yields and especially of total volumes in all municipalities of the region.

In Kyustendil in recent years there has been a trend of continuous decrease in autumn cereals sown, but the transition period has had the most adverse impact on fruit growing. In some of the productions, the reduction is so great that it is tantamount to a gradual disappearance, especially of its marketable nature. The worst affected is apple production, which today is downright symbolic - only a few hundred acres and three times lower yields, compared with almost 20 000 acres in the mid-1980s. In cherries, things are not quite so tragic, although the decline in acreage since the peak years has more than doubled and yields are down 25%. A significant factor and resource for the development of the sub-sector, not only in the municipality, but for the whole region, is the Institute of Fruit Growing near the town of Bled. It has strong capacities to provide specialized expert assistance and to supply planting material to farmers.

The area of Treklyano is also suitable for fruit growing, but this agricultural sub-sector is almost completely abandoned. Crop production is represented by a few potato producers on a few dozen acres.

The main agricultural activity in Trun is carried out by 79 registered farmers, of which about 35 are tenants specializing in the production of potatoes and cereals.

The municipality of Zemen is not a traditional agricultural area. For years, traditional agricultural industries (fruit growing, potato production, etc.) have been destroyed. The presence of more than 4 000 acres of alluvial-fallow soils along the four rivers provides excellent conditions for the development of intensive agriculture with traditional or alternative specialisation.

In the area of **livestock farming, there has been a** decrease in the number of animals kept in the municipalities. Livestock are exclusively kept on private and family-owned private farms. The decrease during the reporting period is due to the following reasons: Fragmented crop production; disturbed breeding stock; high cost of elite breeding material; high cost of feed produced; high cost of medicines and drugs; lack of free financial resources in cooperatives and private farmers; low farm gate prices of the produced produce, often below cost; irregular payment of the produced produce by processing companies; low qualification of the livestock workers, ageing and declining population in villages.

Kyustendil has a multi-sectoral livestock breeding, in which dairy cattle and poultry breeding have a larger share. Livestock farming in Treklyano and Trun is represented by small family farms of a few cows or sheep. Livestock farming in the municipality of Zemen is also experiencing negative trends. Only in the period 1992 - 2002 the number of farm animals has halved.

A serious advantage and significant economic resource of the cross-border area is the high share of forests, especially for the smaller mountain municipalities (see Table 3), where the **forestry sector** is of great importance for the economic landscape of the area. This is a major prerequisite for the development of the timber, wood processing and furniture industries. Unfortunately, a major obstacle to the development of the sector is illegal and often chaotic logging, which leads to the deforestation of significant areas, together with the numerous forest fires characteristic of the area.

The high share of forests in the municipalities of Tran, Treklano, Zemen and Kyustendil is also a prerequisite for the development of hunting tourism, the collection of wild fruits, mushrooms, herbs and ecotourism.

Primary afforestation is taking place in the forest stock, mainly in areas of drying plantations and crops in firebreaks, bare areas and clearings. The current priority is the sustainability of forest crops, not just their productivity. Challenges to the region's forests are related to poaching, corruption in governance structures and increasing anthropogenic activity in some forestry areas (e.g. Kyustendil and Trun). The problem of restoration of ownership of forests and forest land to municipalities and private individuals remains serious. As it is typical for the whole country, it has not been completed here either, and this in turn leads to almost permanent conflicts of interest due to unpaid compensation to owners for confiscated forests, etc. The economic development of a given geographical or administrative territory reflects the social and economic dimensions of the change in the standard of living of the population due to the change in the nature, scope and volume of economic activity within the territory. According to the Lisbon Strategy, the main priority is the achievement of sustainable economic growth and the provision of more and better jobs. Forestry has its traditions in Kyustendil municipality. The forests on the territory of the municipality are managed by the State Forest Enterprise "Kyustendil" and the State Forest Enterprise "Osogovo". They are located on an area of 413 247 ha. Kyustendil municipality has a higher than the national average forest cover. Forests occupy 47,3 % of its territory and this share is significantly higher than the average for Bulgaria (33,47 %). Training of personnel for the sector is carried out by the Vocational School of Woodworking and Forestry in the following specialities: Interior Architecture; Wood Carving; Furniture Production; Forestry. The high school has good material and technical base and provides high professional qualification, on a solid general education (Investment profile of the municipalities 2008).

Forestry is an extremely important and profitable means on the territory of the community. Treklyano. The activity is carried out in two directions: protection and reproduction of forest resources; ecologically sound use of wood resources. The forest territory of the municipality is a favourable environment for the development of hunting and farming activities. The natural resources are favourable for the development of domestic and international tourism, including through the holding of the traditional International Fair in the area of 'Slavcheto' with R. Serbia.

The forest fund in the municipalities of Tran and Zemen, which is 55.2 or 316.6 ha and 57.3% or 156.5 ha respectively, is perceived by the people as one of the main factors for improving the living conditions, especially in rural and mountainous areas. About 20-22% of the forest stock is afforested, but the forests are mainly used for firewood and pulpwood.

2. MINING ACTIVITIES

Useful minerals in the municipality. Kyustendil are mainly expressed in deposits of polymetallic ores (Osogov ore area), aggregates, quality clays (near Dragovishchitsa village) and coal. The great development of heavy industry about 35 years ago necessitated the search for minerals. Older geological surveys identified small deposits of brown coal in the southern fence. A minor lignite deposit has also been discovered near the village of Sovoljano in the north-western part of the valley. In 1905, the 'Sovoljano' coal mine was opened, but subsequently closed due to lack of transport. Coal mining subsequently resumed in 1921 and 1945-1955. After exhaustion of the coal seam in 1955, the 'Sovoljano' mine was permanently closed. Tertiary sediments in the area of the villages of Tarsino, Bersin and Lelintsi provide indications of coal seam deposits. In the vicinity of the village of Smolychino, immediately on top of dolomitised limestone, a coal seam of high calorific value has been deposited. However, the tertiary formations cover a relatively small area, so the coal is in limited quantity. In the southern part of the valley, in the villages of Stradalovo and Tsarvaritsa, oil shales with an average thickness of 1-1.5 m are found in many places. In the vicinity of the village of Gueshevo are the Lebnitsa mine, the Silver Colliery from the lead-zinc ore deposit and the Osogovo flotation plant (now closed). Kausto-Gold, JSC, Kyustendil is a 10-year concessionaire for the extraction of solid fuels - brown coal, building materials - ballast, and metallic minerals - gold, in connection with their complex extraction from the Katrishte deposit, municipality of Kyustendil. Kyustendil. Permits for prospecting and exploration of non-metallic minerals for a period of 3 years on an area of 0.712 sq.km. were obtained by Geoprokad Ltd. in the Grunchar deposit, Kyustendil municipality (Municipal Development Plan.20005)

"Enemona AD will search for non-metallic minerals from "Kyustendilsko Kraishte", Treklyano municipality. The area is 49,98 sq. km. The planned investment in exploration activities is about BGN 140 thousand. Of these, about BGN 128 thousand are for prospecting, and about BGN 13 thousand for exploration. - for environmental protection.

In the past in the area of the town of. Gold was mined in the past in the area of Tran. Following exploration in 2006 by the Canadian company Martern, a subsidiary of Canadian company Euromax Resources Ltd, which explored the area together with Tech Cominco Limited, it was reported that more than 440 g of the precious metal could be extracted from the Nadezhda deposit near the town of Trnovo. The company has also found more than 440,000 tonnes of ore from the "Hope" deposit. This is hundreds of times more than the production so far in our other deposits - about 3-5 g per tonne. A deposit from which more than 5 g can be extracted is considered profitable and a yield of 100 g is considered exceptional. The two companies plan to invest C\$14.7 million in the area. The initial program is currently underway, according to which CAD 280 thousand should be invested in exploration. The deposit was discovered after preliminary soil assays showed a result of 9 g per tonne in a sample.

In the overall structure of production in the mining sector of the municipality of Zemen, the following will remain priorities: production of lime and lime mortars, stone-crushing materials, refractory clay.

SECONDARY SECTOR

Industry

In the study area, industrial industries and activities are experiencing the strong impact of the reforms of recent decades, as well as the negative impacts of the economic crisis of the last year, year and a half. Industries that are a legacy of the centralized economy are unable to respond to the challenges of a globalizing global, regional and even national market. As a result,

bankruptcies, especially in heavy industry, are not uncommon in the transition period. Specialisation in areas related to the collapsed markets of the CIS and the former Soviet republics are a further reason for the closure or downsizing of a number of enterprises in the region (Development Plan of Trn Municipality 2006-2013).

The following features can be identified in the industry of the target region: - industrial specialization is concentrated in industries that are insufficiently adapted to the available resources of the territory and with low added value, and this gives rise today to serious structural problems; - the territorial concentration of industrial production and activities is mainly in the regional center Kyustendil and it naturally experiences the most serious negative effects of the changes; - a constantly decreasing share of industrial production in the structure of the formed product; - morally, and in p Despite these problems, however, at this stage the municipalities with a predominant share of industry in the local economy still have relatively higher incomes of the population, in contrast to those specialized in the agricultural sector.

In common. Kyustendil there were 2290 enterprises. Of these, the largest relative share is occupied by enterprises with a number of employees up to 10 people - 92.14% (2110 enterprises), and the smallest (only 0.3%) of those with a staff of over 250 people. In general, we have a decrease in the number of industrial enterprises, increasing net sales revenues but decreasing final profits. There are also municipal trading companies operating in the municipality, in which the municipality is the sole owner of the capital. These are: "Hygia" Ltd, "BKS" Ltd and "DDD" Ltd, "NARMAG" (in liquidation). The assessment of the investment activity shows that the acquired tangible fixed assets amounted to BGN 16 539 thousand. The largest expenditures were incurred for the acquisition of machinery, equipment and vehicles - 62.34%, buildings, construction equipment and structures - 26.95% and land - 6.12%. Today the economic structure of the municipality is defined by commercial companies operating in the sphere of:

- Kitchen furniture - "Torgotherm" AD;
- Textile industry - TPK "Osogovo", "Boditex" EOOD, "Etavia" AD, "Velbezh" AD;
- Sewing industry - "Vital" Ltd, ET "Valentin Zlatkov - Valena", ET "Valeri Georgiev - Vita Style", "Moni Petrov" Ltd, ET "Snezhinka Zlatkova - Snezhanka", "Texicom" Ltd, "Texco" Ltd, "Inkstil" Ltd, "New Line - Dimitrios Avgostinos" Ltd;
- Footwear production - "Ilyo Voyvoda" AD, "Tiziano" Ltd, "Daris" Ltd, "Jiwal" Ltd, "Erika Limited" Ltd, "Moda Bulita" Ltd, "Vesika" Ltd;
- Transformers: "Elektron" Ltd;
- Condensers: "Arcotronics Bulgaria" AD, "Konis Company" Ltd;
- Food and beverages industry: ET "Lyubka Koleva - Misha", "Stratos" Ltd., "Kyustendil Bread Factory" Ltd., "Spectrum - Comp" Ltd., ET "Slavcho Kerelski - Sati - 91", "K+M" Ltd., ET "Maxim Srandev - Mak", ET "Georgi Borisov";
- Production of toys - "Detska radost" Ltd;
- Production of spirits - "Vinprom Kyustendil" AD. On the territory of the community. There is only one Bakelite workshop in the territory of the municipality of Treklyano, which employs about 20 people.

In common. Mini hydroelectric power plant on the river Erma. The plant was built in four years. In nine years the HPP will cover the costs incurred and will be profitable. The small plant produces 170 kilowatts of electricity per hour and its owners have already signed a contract with CEZ for the purchase of the electricity produced. The plant operates with a turbine manufactured by a German company. "Balkankar - Erma AD is a state-owned enterprise, owned

by Balkankar Holding and the Ministry of Economy and Energy. It produces galvanic and plate circuits; it employs 80 people, but there is currently almost no production. "Krakrales AD - a state-owned logging enterprise with good development prospects, provided that good coordination between the enterprise's management and the local authorities is ensured. Ideal Pipe Ltd. in Trun - is a water and sewerage pipe manufacturing enterprise that applies new technologies in its production process (re-registered Fintech Bulgaria) - creates employment for 30 people. "Hydrocomp Ltd - Thorn Spring table water bottling plant in the village of. Initially, the enterprise will provide employment for 30 people, with the trend being to expand the activity, move to shift work and consequently create additional jobs. In the municipality, the bakers are ET 'Kenton' - Vasil Vassilev, SD 'Tony' - Anton Nikolov and RPC. The majority of the energy and production capacities of the industry in the municipality of Zemen were established in the 1980s, both in volume and structure. The industries have a high degree of consumption of energy resources, labour, materials and outdated, uncompetitive technologies. In the overall structure of manufactured industrial output, priority will be given to: building materials manufacturing and food processing.

TERTIARY SECTOR

Services are the fastest growing segment of the modern economy of the study region. It is characterised by better efficiency compared to other economic industries and activities. This is mainly reflected in the strong reallocation of the labour force mainly from industry and less from the agricultural sector to services. This is characteristic of almost all municipalities in the cross-border area, as it is currently economically viable and at the same time ensures the sustainability of social processes.

The main part of the social services in the study area, related to health, education, transport and other activities are territorially concentrated in the regional center Kyustendil. Apart from the administrative prerequisites for this, it has considerable resources and traditions. In other municipalities, separate segments of these services are developed, which often creates problems with the normal access of the population, especially from small settlements to them.

The problems in the territorial organisation of health care in the region, which is currently undergoing reform, are extremely serious. The most serious are the challenges with access to hospital care in small municipalities, such as Trun, for example, where the future of the main health facility remains unclear.

The lack of a real centre of higher education (even college education) in the cross-border area limits not only the local population in their attempts to improve their qualifications, but also the possibilities of offering such educational services to representatives of the neighbouring Serbian and Macedonian border regions (Bulgaria-Serbia cross-border 2007).

Transport services in the study area are increasingly struggling to cover all settlements with regular services. There are already many small villages that are not served by any public transport. It is significant that in the whole community. Treklyano has not a single gas station (the last one was closed in 2008), which forces the population to travel 40-50 km to refuel. All this is a serious prerequisite for negative social and, consequently, demographic processes. Communications and other communications in the area are at an unsatisfactory level except in the district and some of the municipal centres. For the majority of the population, only the traditional services of voice telephony are available through analogue exchanges, Internet but mostly over switched lines, and mobile communications have relatively good coverage.

Plumbing services have significant regional variations. Most of the settlements have central water supply, but the problem is the water transmission network, which is mainly made of

etherite pipes. Its operation is associated with a high accident rate and the generation of relatively large losses of water resources, which in some parts of the region are quite limited. The sewerage system is well below modern standards. Rural settlements lack a sewerage network in large numbers and there are also centres where there are no serious treatment facilities. Tourism, which is traditionally perceived as a profitable sector with significant potential for development, has been identified as a priority for the border area under study. On the basis of the diverse natural and anthropogenic resources and seriously renewing facilities in the area, tourism services have a constantly expanding position in the economy of a number of municipalities. The economic context of the analyzed period, both globally and regionally, is marked by the consequences of the global economic crisis that began in 2007 in the USA and worsened globally in 2008. The main challenges are related to: improving the overall infrastructure serving tourism directly and indirectly; creating conditions for year-round use of tourist potential through additional products and attractions to extend the season; improving service quality through investment in the human factor; improving the image of tourist sites by developing an adequate marketing strategy that focuses on the uniqueness of local destinations and creating modern multimedia opportunities to promote the region.

CONCLUSION

It is important to underline that despite the difficult mountainous relief, high altitude, difficult accessibility, harsh climate and infertile soils, Kraishte was settled to a significant extent. The region has its present and future, but it is related to its modernization and attracting investments. The most ancient registered settlements are from the time of the late Chalcolithic (near the villages of Dolno Kobile and Brest), and the new ones have an important geo-economic significance, but the demographic process is also important for them. It is important to underline that despite the difficult mountainous relief, high altitude, difficult accessibility, harsh climate and infertile soils, Kraishte was settled to a significant extent. The region has its present and future, but it is related to its modernization and attracting investments. The most ancient registered settlements are from the time of the late Chalcolithic (near the villages of Dolno Kobile and Brest), and the new ones have an important geo-economic significance, but the demographic process is also important for them. The peculiarities of the relief in the area (deep gorges with bare and steep slopes and no larger plain) suggest the formation of Chinese settlements. None of the modern villages in Kraishte have a compact character, but are scattered in hamlets, often several kilometers apart. The region may be of strategic importance for the development of tourism and recreation, but it needs a lot of work. Efforts and activities in this area should be directed in two directions: optimization of the system and support for educational institutions that offer quality and adequate education to modern requirements. The peculiarities of the relief in the area (deep gorges with bare and steep slopes and no larger plain) suggest the formation of Chinese settlements. None of the modern villages in Kraishte have a compact character, but are scattered in hamlets, often several kilometers apart. The region may be of strategic importance for the development of tourism and recreation, but it needs a lot of work. Efforts and activities in this area should be directed in two directions: optimization of the system and support for educational institutions that offer quality and adequate education to modern requirements. In summary, we can say that the Kraishte region has its socio-economic significance for the regional development of Bulgaria.

REFERENCES

- Zahariev. I. The Kyustendil Region, Collected Works, 32, S. 1918.
- Zahariev. I. A guide to anthropogeographical studies in Bulgaria. "School Review", vol. 6, S. 1928.
- Opportunity for cross-border cooperation between the municipalities of Kovachevtsi, Zemen, Treklyano (R. Bulgaria) and Bosilegrad (R.Serbia). Neighbourhood Programme - Sustainable Economic Development. 2005.
- Investment profile of the municipalities of Kovachevtsi, Zemen, Treklyano (Bulgaria) and Bosilegrad (Serbia) - region "Krajiste". 2008.
- National Plan for Agricultural and Rural Development 2007-2013.
- Municipal Development Plan of Commun. Kyustendil (2007-2013). Kyustendil. 2005.
- Development Plan of Trn Municipality 2006-2013. Res. Municipal Council - Trun № 64/30.12.2005.
- Tourism Development Programme in the Municipality of Trun for 2005-2007.
- Bulgaria-Serbia cross-border cooperation programme - Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. 2007.
- Strategy for joint development of Kyustendil and Pernik districts and Pchinski and Yablanicki districts. Association "CMI- Kyustendil", 2007.