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**TOURISM  
IN FUNCTION OF DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

Tourism product as a factor of competitiveness of  
the Serbian economy and experiences of other countries



**THEMATIC  
PROCEEDINGS**

**II**



**UNIVERSITY OF KRAGUJEVAC  
FACULTY OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT  
AND TOURISM IN VRNJAČKA BANJA**



# ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS OF SERBIA

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## **Abstract**

*The importance of tourism in recent years, having in mind its effects on the economic development of rural areas, is the subject of increasing attention. Due to the that fact, the subject of this research work is the economic effects of tourism development in rural areas of the Republic of Serbia. The aim of this paper is to point out the importance of the role of tourism in economic development of rural areas. The richness and preservation of natural resources and their insufficient use in these areas on the one side, and insufficient investment in the development of rural areas on the other side, are the subject of analysis in this paper.*

*Key words: tourism development, rural areas, economic development, economic effect*

*JEL classification: R0*

## **Introduction**

The importance of the service sector in the world economy is the subject of analysis of many authors. One of the main reasons for such an attitude and emphasis on this sector is its significance and increasing participation in the creation of income and employment. The service sector employs more than 65% of the total employed population (Čerović, 2008). One of the indicators of development of a national economy is the contribution of this sector in the above categories, and for this reason developed countries give the services sector the increasing importance (Tornjanski, 2016). Regardless of the fact that Serbia cannot be classified into this group of countries, we must not forget the fact that, especially in recent years, the service sector in Serbia has increased. This is precisely the reason why the Serbian economy must give more importance to this sector. Tourism has

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long been social and economic phenomenon, and therefore must be accepted as an effective instrument for improving the economic situation in the country because all benefit from its long-term development. The tourism industry itself is one of the most developed industries whose development is not important only itself, but it is also important due to the fact that it promotes and influences the development of other economic activities. Consequently, it affects the macroeconomic aggregates. From the facts above stated, it is clear that tourism enables an acceleration of regional and national development and employment growth in underdeveloped areas. Regardless of the period of economic crisis that has affected territorially more or less almost all countries of the world, as well as various economic activities including tourism, it is clear that in the following period this economic activity will become one of the leading economic sectors. The very development of tourism began with the development of the slavery society when the motive and extant of travel was significantly different and smaller than in the modern form, and its development can be identified with the economic development of a country (Pantić, 2016).

Tourism, as a service activity, precisely for all these reasons, must be given special attention in the future, through not only strategies as an inevitable and necessary prerequisites but its implementation in order to achieve the above objectives. Education and training of personnel is a necessary condition for achieving long-term goals set. Higher production as a result has a higher employment or lower unemployment, higher standard, positive influence on the balance of payments and as a result of increased gross domestic product (Pantić & Leković, 2013).

Tourism has a broader social, political and economic importance (Unković, 2007). When studying its economic importance, it would be wrong to ignore both the social and its political role. In the analysis of its economic value for a specific area we have to bear in mind the influence of a group of factors (Medlik, 1966):

1. Tourism attractiveness (cultural-historical heritage, climatic conditions, natural beauties etc.);
2. Accessibility (development of traffic networks);
3. Tourism offer (accommodation, entertainment, public transport etc.);
4. Organization of tourism and political improvement.

## **The importance and function of rural tourism as a factor of rural development**

The modern process of globalization and accelerated urban life as a result created the need for rest, peace, recreation and relaxation away from the daily time limit routine. These needs especially of the urban population can best be implemented in rural areas as a primary resource for the development of rural tourism. A large part of the territory of the Republic of Serbia can be characterized precisely in that way. Historically, rural tourism occurs when the privileged social classes spent their time in rural areas. Witnesses of that are numerous objects that are made with the purpose to provide accommodation and are still present as a witness of that time. Only with the process of industrialization, tourism is becoming a mass phenomenon.

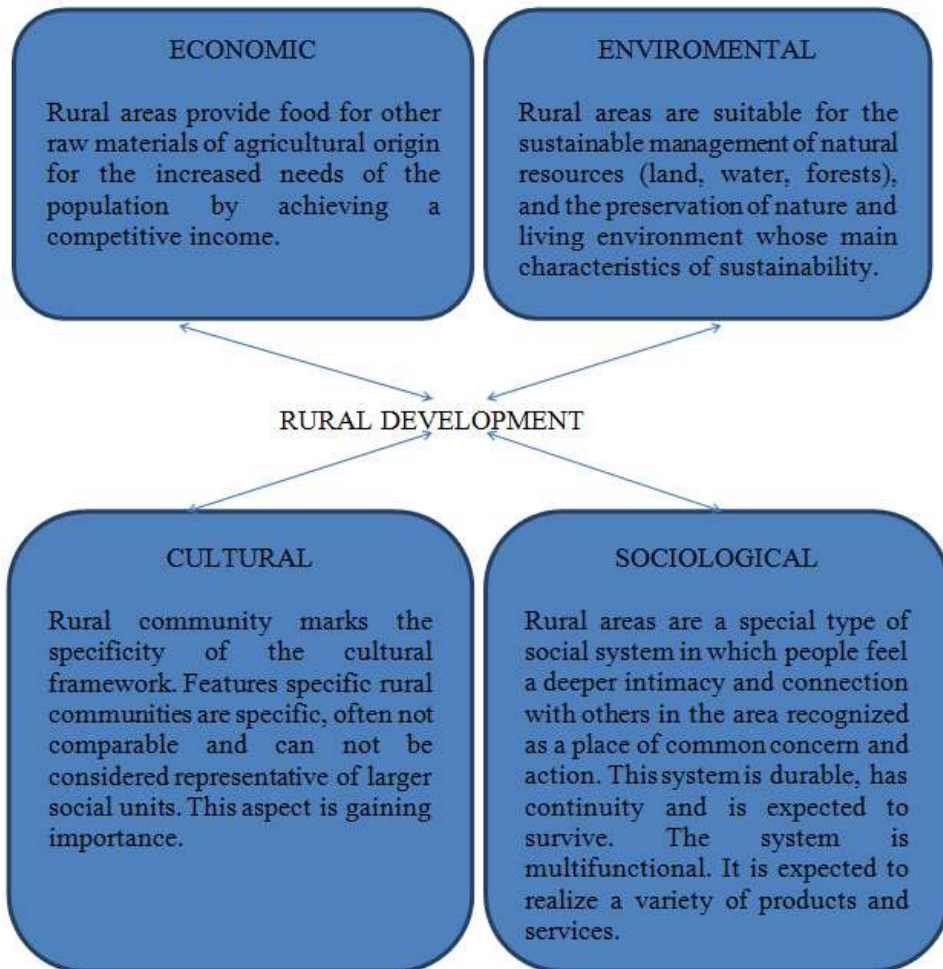
One must not ignore the difficulties in defining the concept of "rural." In this sense, the distinction must be made between economic and sociological aspects (Milić, 2011). From the economic point of view, under the term is considered rural territory for food production, while the social aspect gives a slightly better determinant of this term. The term means the rural environment is characterized by strong backwardness compared to the technological and cultural development as compared to that in urban areas (Milić, 2011).

The matter of defining Rural Development is also in the focus of the European Union which defines rural development a multi-functional concept in which rural development has a quadruple role (Milić, 2011):

Figure 1. shows that rural development has four functions which are as follows:

- economic, which relates to the provision of food in rural areas for the purposes of both tourists and population of these regions, which has deep effects on the production and an increase in income, and thus the standard of living in these areas;
- environmental, which includes primarily the sustainability of natural resources as a necessary factor for the development of rural tourism in these areas. Such a need arises not only as one of the factors of attractiveness for potential tourists, but also, and perhaps more importantly, as one of the basic principles of conservation and transmission to future generations all the natural beauty as one of the most important items of national identity;

Figure 1: *Multifunctionality of rural development*



Source: *Milić, 2011*

- cultural, rural community marks the specificity of the cultural framework. Features of specific rural communities are specific, often not comparable and cannot be considered representative of larger social units. This aspect is gaining increasing importance;
- sociological, rural areas are a special type of social system in which people feel a deeper intimacy and connection with others in the area recognized as a place of common concern and action. This system is durable, has continuity and is expected to survive. The system is multifunctional. It is expected to produce a variety of products and services;

The offer in rural tourism should not be limited only to the natural beauty that this area provides, but must take into account the experience made in communicating with the local population, hospitality, local customs. These categories are impossible to quantify but certainly play a major role in overall satisfaction in some touristic visits. Although there are still no official figures, according to some estimates, about 25% of tourists in the world annually opt for rural tourism. This trend will continue in the future, in favor of mostly conducted research of the World Tourism Organization (Gašić, et al 2014)

### Population distribution of rural population

Regardless of the need and aspiration for a person to be as often as possible and more in touch with the nature, the data at the global level show quite different trends (Đekić & Jovanović, 2009). In fact, a decades-long trend of people moving from rural areas to cities continues (Đekić, 2000). The following table shows just that.

Table 1: *Population distribution of the participation of the rural population-condition and projection*

	Population in millions						Share of the rural population		
	1975		2000		2030		1975	2000	2030
	urb	rur	urb	rur	urb	rur			
<b>Africa</b>	102	304	295	498	787	702	75	63	47
<b>Asia</b>	592	1805	1376	2297	2679	2271	75	63	46
<b>S. America</b>	198	124	391	498	127	608	39	25	15
<b>N. America</b>	180	64	243	71	335	61	26	23	16
<b>Europe</b>	455	221	534	193	540	131	33	27	20
<b>Australia</b>	15	6	23	8	32	10	28	26	23

Source: *UNWTO*

Table 1 shows the distribution of the continental urban and rural populations, as well as for the projection of 2030 taking into account all relevant factors. The absolute and relative share of urban and rural population was analyzed in 1975, 2000 and projected for 2030. What is immediately noticeable is that the largest share of the rural population characteristic of the two continents and for Africa and Asia is 75% in 1975, 63% in 2000, and a projected share is almost identical to 2030. Every fourth resident of Africa and Asia in 1975 was settled in urban areas while it is anticipated that 2030 would be every other resident. The

smallest projected percentage of the rural population refers to South and North America, where it is expected that in 2030 to be 15% respectively 16% to inhabit this territory. Also, what is evident to all continents is that the percentage share of the rural population decreases over time as in the previous part of the paper as hinted and expected. These are certainly the data which do not support the development of rural tourism and globally. Fewer and fewer people in these areas increase the need for increasing education and spreading awareness about the need for the development of rural tourism, as well as relevant policies whose implementation would encourage, if not the population of these areas, then at least the retention and retaining people in rural areas in order to develop this type of tourism. By following examples of good practice and appropriate investment that is certainly feasible.

### **Rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia and its economic effects**

A large part of the territory of the Republic of Serbia can be characterized as rural. Nearly 4,000 villages are a great resource for the development of rural tourism. The fact is that most of these villages can be considered small with a predominantly elderly population for which there is a risk that in two decades, these villages will lose the entire population (Dubičanin & Lunić, 2015). However, this is not the only problem. Certainly, its solution should be a priority, but no adequate tourism products are something to brag about. Rural tourism can be experienced as an important auxiliary economic sector that will enhance and ensure the development of rural communities (Dubičanin & Lunić, 2015). One of the main objectives of rural tourism is certainly providing revenue to the rural population through the consolidation of a series of tourist attractions. The development of this type of tourism will establish balance in inequality primarily in economic development and the distribution of resources between rural and urban areas (Bogdanov, 2007). So far, rural tourism is still not well organized and structured. There is no clear mention of the program or action plans that would relate to rural areas. Positive trends were numerous, among others, to keep young people in the country, new jobs and increased employment opportunities for women, better capacity utilization (Manić, 2014). The expectation that tourism contributes to faster development and revitalization of rural areas in Serbia is based on the probable economic effects of the development of this activity.

We should not forget that engaging in this activity opens up the possibility of rural households to generate revenues from sales of products from own production of the local population. Rural tourism in average employs two members of the household, and the average net income of rural tourism is about 200 euros (Bošković, 2012). Development of rural tourism can contribute to the economic empowerment of rural population (Dedeić, 2015). The development of this type of tourism primarily encourages the development of agriculture. Given that rural tourism relies primarily on domestic demand from urban areas, its intensive development could contribute to the transfer of income from economically more developed urban regions in less developed rural areas (Cvijanović & Mihailović, 2016). Thus, tourism has contributed to faster economic development of rural areas which would result in reducing the existing gap in the development of rural and urban areas.

If we look at the territory of the Republic of Serbia can be noted the great potential for rural tourism development and its insufficient utilization. The following table provides an overview of some of the indicators.

Table 2: *Indicators of population and surface area*

	<b>Republic of Serbia</b>	<b>Rural areas</b>
<b>Geographic indicators</b>		
Surface area in km <sup>2</sup>	88.361	65.952
Number of settlements	4.715	3.904
<b>Population</b>		
Number of residents (2002)	7.498.001	4.161.660
Number of residents (2011)	7.186.862	3.786.536
Number of residents (2016)	7.076.372	3.526.349

Source: *Manić, 2014*

Table 2 provides an overview of the geographical indicators and population. It can be seen that the rural areas occupy a significant part of the territory with up to 65,952 square kilometers, which accounts for a significant part of the total territory. This is a necessary condition for the development of rural tourism, but not sufficient, because the resources that are not adequately exploited and insufficient investment activity in these areas would not allow for comparative advantages in an adequate manner and take advantage.

Extensive depopulation of the entire European continent is a trend that was evident last 20 years. The data of the number of population of the Republic of Serbia also indicate that fact. In fact, according to the 2002 census in Serbia lived 7,498,001 inhabitants, in 2011 even less 311,139 inhabitants, respectively the number of population has decreased from 7,498,001 to 7,076,372 in the last 5 years, which is certainly a fact that worries. It is not only a problem in the declining number of inhabitants in the territory of the state, but the trend is visible and when it comes to rural areas. This area is populated by 2002 residents 4,161,660 inhabitants or 55% of the total population. If we analyze the data according to the years that the table lists the situation in 2006 shows that the number of inhabitants in rural areas decreased from 4,161,660 to 3,786,536, respectively to 375 124. This reduction is not only in absolute terms but also in relative given that in 2006 year 52% settled rural areas compared to 55% according to the 2002 census. These data are not surprising given that it is a commonly known fact the movement of population to the cities in search of better living conditions. The previous 2016 also confirms this conclusion on the reduction of the population, because for 5 years, from 2011 to 2016, the population decreased by 110,490. In this period is reduced the number of inhabitants of rural areas to 260,187. The decreasing trend in both absolute and relative terms is obvious in this period. Only 49.8% of the population has inhabited these areas compared to 55% according to data from 2002 and 52% on the basis of data from.

The previous table showed a tendency and disposition of Serbia's population in rural areas. Next closely shows this structure by areas within the borders of the country.

Table 3: *Percentage of urban and rural population in the territory of the Republic of Serbia for 2016*

	<b>Urban population</b>	<b>Rural population</b>
<b>Serbia</b>	51%	49%
<b>Belgrade</b>	80%	20%
<b>Vojvodina</b>	57%	43%
<b>Sumadija and Western Serbia</b>	52%	48%
<b>Southern and Eastern Serrbia</b>	50%	50%
<b>Kosovo and Metohija</b>	42%	58%

Source: RZS

As already mentioned, almost 50% of Serbian population lives in rural areas. Except for Belgrade, where the expected distribution is different because even 80% of the population inhabits cities and only 20% in rural areas. Such distribution is geographically conditioned. The highest percentage of rural population in Kosovo and Metohija, as many as 58% of the population inhabits these areas compared to 42% who inhabit the cities. If we observe in Vojvodina, Sumadija and Western Serbia, as well as Southern and Eastern Serbia the situation is similar to the fact that this percentage ranges from 43% in Vojvodina and 50% in Southern and Eastern Serbia.

Based on a quantitative expressed data, where as the main characteristics as may indicate migration of people from rural areas, today these areas are characterized as poor, regardless of their development potential. For this reason, it is necessary to take appropriate measures in order to revive these areas. Examples of European practices could serve as a good model in revitalizing rural areas through diversification of economic activities (Bošković, 2012). Tourism has its many advantages compared to other activities. For this reason it must be singled out as one of the important activities whose development should be encouraged by national rural development policy. Only then tourism can contribute to economic revitalization and strengthening of underdeveloped rural areas. The next group of functions that all types of tourism and thus rural tourism in the society shows the importance of its development. Some of the functions performed by the rural tourism are as follows:

1. Economic, which is divided into a direct economical functions and effects as those that are indirectly. If tax incentives affect the increased investment activity and thus create income from the development of rural tourism, we talk about direct function, or the effect of rural tourism. Practice shows that investment activity is very low, while in some areas virtually non-existent.

When talking about the indirect effects, then attention focuses on the development of those economic activities that are indirectly related to tourism and have a great importance in meeting the needs of tourists. It should be noted the most significant indirect effects:

- The impact on the construction industry. Here we are talking primarily about the accommodation facilities that are designed for tourists. Accommodation facilities must meet the needs of tourists and does not include construction and adaptation, but also previously constructed

facilities in accordance with the requirements and needs of tourists. During the construction of both new and upgraded capacity, should be taken into account their harmonization and integration into the integrity of the environment in which they are located. It should also be taken into account in areas that have a certain specificity. For example, in those areas where there are monasteries and other cultural and historical attractions, the accommodation capacity should not be dominant in order not to disturb the ethnic identity and the natural tranquility of rural areas. During building capacity, it should be taken into account if there are opportunities to employ people from the local community.

- The impact on agriculture. Not only accommodation facilities, but also the food makes the inevitable assumption of the complete tourist offer. Through the development of tourism, in addition to the above industries, the agriculture is also developed, and there is an increase in agricultural production in order to meet the increasing needs of tourists. This development also has a significant impact on employment growth not only of local residents, but also the total employment growth and GDP growth.
- The impact on traffic. Traffic from all industries has the greatest impact in turning tourism into a mass phenomenon. The first two industrial revolutions are the time of prime of tourism as a result of facilitating the transport of people and goods. Good road infrastructure and developed network traffic are important prerequisites for tourism development of any fields or areas. Unfortunately, Serbia cannot boast with a developed network of roads in rural areas, which is certainly one of the main obstacles to the development of tourism. The issue of investment in road infrastructure should be one of the key fact when designing a tourism development strategy.

2. The social function. This function, especially in rural areas is still not sufficiently developed. For this reason will be mentioned only some of them. First of all, it is implied of raising living standards, a stable growth of the index of quality of life, education and continuing training. The population of rural areas cannot claim enviable levels of education and the tendency for training. This is certainly a limiting factor especially when we take into account the constant changes in trends that must be followed to ensure that all the needs of tourists, who are a constantly growing category, are pleased.
3. The function of environmental protection. Challenges for environmental protection are increasing and represent one of the main

prerequisites for the development of this type of tourism. Rural tourism development must be based on, above all, the preservation of the natural ambient or the environment. Through the revival of eco-tourism activities must be taken into account the natural environment. Also, during the construction of accommodation facilities must be taken into account and find a balance between modern and traditional. During the construction of facilities, in addition to the necessary permits must be used modern technical and technological breakthroughs that have to be integrated into the spirit and tradition of the local customs. In order to make all things have sense and others in the spirit of traditional environmental impact should be minimal and should take into account the protection of the cultural components of the environment. For this reason is necessary first of environmental education not only of employees but also of tourists themselves in order to preserve nature and its environment. Currently it seems to be very difficult, sometimes even impossible, but just such an approach to the principles enables, in the long term, the sustainability and a very significant economic impact of this type of tourism. Here the state with its policies and mechanisms of implementation can and must play a significant role. Until then, if nothing else must be raised the awareness of the importance of the above discussed.

Historically stagnation in the development of rural tourism in Serbia has been most pronounced in the last decade of the twentieth century. The reason for such a situation in this period is due to the wars that have made the greatest mark in this period. This period will remain marked as a period of isolation caused by sanctions which make it both interest and needs for the development of tourism policy and the promotion of tourism. The tourist offer was full of shortcomings from which should be mentioned the following (Bjeljac, et al., 2009):

- Poor and outdated structure of accommodation facilities;
- Non-compliance of offer to demand requirements;
- Lack of attractive products as a factor to attract foreign tourists;
- Poor road infrastructure and inaccessibility of many sites;
- Inadequate municipal infrastructure.

The beginning of the 21st century brought with it certain changes in all spheres of society. The subject of analysis of the following table will give a bit clearer picture of the state of affairs in this period.

Table 4: *Number of overnights in rural areas*

<b>12. Year</b>	<b>13. Number of overnights in rural areas</b>	<b>14. Difference compared to the previous year</b>
15. 2005	16. 1.411.305	17. -
18. 2006	19. 1.354.027	20. -57.278
21. 2007	22. 1.528.289	23. 174.262
24. 2008	25. 1.636.509	26. 108.220
27. 2009	28. 1.453.792	29. -182.717
30. 2010	31. 1.437.714	32. -16.078
33. 2011	34. 1.383.947	35. -53.767
36. 2012	37. 1.382.222	38. -1.725
39. 2013	40. 1.356.633	41. -25.589
42. 2014	43. 1.218.552	44. -138.081
45. 2015	46. 1.209.534	47. -9.018
48. 2016	49. 1.211.568	50. 2.034
51. In total	52. 16.584.192	53.

Source: *RZS*

Table 4 provides data on the number of overnight stays in rural areas of Serbia in the past 12 years, namely in the period from 2005 to 2016, and the total number of days in the reporting period. The largest number of overnight stays was recorded in 2008 and amounted to 1,636,509 which is 225,204 more nights than achieved in 2005 when the data in this table are followed. If this period from 2005 to 2008, is considered isolated, it is observed mainly upward trend except for 2006 when the decline was noticed from 1,411,305 overnight stays to 1,354,027, respectively for 57,278. In 2007 year there was a much larger growth in the number of overnight stays which increased by 174,362 and reached 1,528,389, which was the highest growth rate in the analyzed period. The following year, namely 2008 was a year of growth with the number of nights reaching 108,220, more precisely, from 1,528,389 had risen to 1,636,509 and it is, as previously mentioned, the largest recorded number of nights in the past 12 years.

Large global economic crisis has affected all spheres of social life everywhere in the world, with greater or lesser effects. This crisis has affected the tertiary sector, especially so that the reasons for the crisis and decline rates can partly be viewed through the prism of the global economic crisis. The effects of the crisis are far-reaching and speaking

with the temporal aspect is the long-term. Next, 2009 is the year of the largest falls that can be compared with those recorded in 2007 and amounted to 182,717 fewer overnight stays than in 2008, namely the number dropped from 1,636,509. to 1,453,792. This figure had a very bad impact on revenues from this type of tourism and affected a further decline in the years that followed and 2010 is a noticeable decline in the number of overnight stays, compared to the previous decline, only 16,078 nights, from 1,453,792 to 1,437,714 overnight stays. The downward trend is evident in a longer period of time because from 2008 to 2015 is a category with steady drop in the number of overnight stays. Let's say, 2011 is the year of the big drop because the number decreased by 53,767. Already next year 2012 showed no significant change but there is still a negative trend in the number of overnight stays, though not so much this year because the number that has been reduced to only 1,725 which is certainly the smallest change compared to the previous year was to talk about the decline or growth observed in this twelve-year period. After 2013, when it also decreased the number of nights of 25,589, followed by 2014 with other in the order recorded decline in the reporting period after 2009, when it stood at 182,220. Data from 2014 shows that the number of overnight stays compared to 2013 for 138,081 is lower for the first time recorded the number of overnight stays dropped below 1.3 million and amounted to 1,218,552, which is 9,018 more than in 2015, when it was only 1,209,534. It is also the smallest number of nights recorded statistically, as such information is in itself disappointing.

The previous, 2016 year, is the first year after several years of decline in which a growth was recorded, ignoring any kind of encouragement and positive conclusions but it should be noted that the number of overnight stays increased by 2,034. Records at all are not encouraging from any standpoint to observe or comment. If we observe the year 2005 as compared to 2016 can be concluded that the number of overnight stays decreased by nearly 200,000, or more precisely to 199,737, from 1,411,305 as there were in 2005 to 1,211,568 as noted in 2016. It would be discouraging, that the number remained the same and or increased slightly because even these data unambiguously provide an answer to the question about the state of this type of tourism, but if in this situation would asked such a question, the answer would be itself imposed. By summing annual data is obtained total number of days in the period 2005 to 2016 and amounts to 16,584,192.

## Conclusion

Movement tendencies or migration of the population, both in global terms, but also in Serbia are noticeable. If we add the fact of pronounced depopulation especially in rural areas where the average age is above the average, the current conditions are quite worrying. On the other hand, territorially speaking, a large part of Serbia is characterized by the concept of rural and it is a fact that cannot be avoided. For this reason, any migration from these areas can have adverse economic effects on the economy. With the development of tourism in these regions, the population is able to bind to the village, which can only have positive effects. Development of agricultural production which would certainly be stimulated, the development of industry, as already stated, and other industries would primarily increase employment and the inevitable impact on GDP. This is certainly an issue to be addressed in the period ahead. The state should play the most important role, not only through the development of appropriate strategies and their implementation, but also through appropriate investment activity and build mechanisms to attract foreign investment. The general impression is that there is no consensus on this issue and therefore discord of decision-making process because there is no clear position and a conclusion on this issue. It is necessary therefore to raise the awareness of people about the importance of this issue. Also, it is not only the state that should make decisive efforts. Lack of initiative and creative energy of the local population is too low. An individual or group of individuals must, regardless of reasonable and limiting factors, to have a vision on the development of certain areas. Initiators vision must be motivated and have enough energy for its implementation. The time ahead should be a time of creating a vision that would later be developed into a well-structured idea with clear goals and inevitable results. It is necessary to assemble a team of people who would be in charge of the idea. That team should consist of residents, experts and representatives of local authorities. Solving these rather small and the few problems would create a foundation and a sure path to the development of rural tourism and, consequently, the rural areas.

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