

**SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC REALITY AND  
PERSPECTIVES FOR THE TOWN OF SHUMEN****/RESEARCH ESSAY/****MLADINA ASENOVA, DORIANA NIKOLOVA,**

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**ABSTRACT:** SHUMEN IS A CITY WITH A RICH HISTORY AND MODERN DEVELOPMENT. ITS POPULATION IS CONSTANTLY INCREASING THE YEARS OF LIBERATION TO THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY. BUT THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND MIGRATION AFFECT POPULATION REDUCTION AND ITS EMPLOYMENT. IN HIS ESSAY FORMULATES PREDICTIONS FOR THE FUTURE STATE OF THE HOMETOWN OF SIX STUDENTS WHO BELIEVE THAT, CONTRARY TO NATIONAL PROJECTIONS SHUMEN HAS ITS FUTURE.

**KEY WORDS:** POPULATION, POPULATION GROWTH, SOCIAL STRUCTURE, EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT

**SHUMEN** town is located in Shumen's field that is open to the south-east and gradually reduces its height. The town lies at the foot of Shumen's plateau, which has an extremely varied nature. The climate of the town is temperate continental. The winter is relatively cold and the summer is hot.

**AFTER** the Liberation the town initially declined because of the loss of markets for crafts, the displacement of many Ottomans and the relatively inexpensive, high-quality western industrial goods competing with those produced in the region. But the town gradually recovered and became a regional and district centre. At that time the population of Shumen was about 22 000 residents. The town quickly recovered and developed as a craft centre with a very active life.

**AT** the beginning of socialism (1944 - 1945) the population there was of about 31 000 people. An interesting fact about Shumen is that between 1950 and 1965 the town bore the name "Kolarovgrad." Massive construction of residential blocks began. Factories were built in order to create jobs. Roads were also built and the whole infrastructure of the town was modernized. In 1981 in the park "Shumen Plateau" one of the largest monuments in Bulgaria – "Founders of the Bulgarian country" was built.

IN 1989, the year of the democratic changes the town's population was about 95 000 people. In 2003 the population of Shumen municipality is over 100 000 - 102 429 – 51% of the population of Shumen district. The dynamics of the population of the municipality marked a trend of continuous growth to mid-1980s, followed by a gradual decrease. The downward trend of the population of the municipality continued in this century, but with smaller intensity. There were no significant differences in terms of population dynamics between the Municipality and the region as a whole.

THE demographic developments of the municipality were similar to those of the district – population growth until the middle of the 1980s and a decrease after this period. The tendency of decline in population in recent years had been observed in the north-eastern region for planning as well as in the country as a whole. The centre of the municipality of Shumen was also characterized by a period of population growth until 1985, followed by a period of decline. The decrease was of a higher intensity for 1985 - 1992, while for 1992 - 2001 it was similar to the average indices for the country and the region.

THE rural population of the municipality has been faced with a downward trend ever since the middle of the twentieth century. In recent years there had been stabilization in the period 2002 – 2003 when the growth was positive. The increase was probably due to remigration of population from the higher age groups. In the years between the last two censuses some of the villages (5 of them) of the municipality enjoyed positive growth, which is maintained today and there are four more villages added to that group.

THE changes in the population of the municipality are related to the age structure. The distribution of the population of the Municipality by age group was more favourable than the average indicator for the country conditional on its centre. In 2003 there was a gradual reduction of the number and proportion of young people below 15 years of age. The groups from 15 to 64 years of age had retained their share. Their number had also not changed considerably. People of 65 years and older for the period increased in absolute numbers and percentage, which was observed at district, regional and national level. The ratio between the three main age groups for the Municipality (0-14: 15-64: 65 +) was 14.4: 71.4: 14.2% (2003). The proportion of younger generations was slightly higher than that of the elderly and the population from 15 to 64 years of age, which is the main recruited workforce, has a high share. There are some significant differences in the age composition of the population by settlement. Shumen has a favourable age structure, with a high proportion of the population between 15-64 years (73.4%) and a higher proportion of young people (14.4%) compared to that of the adult population (12.2%). The age structure of the rural population marks the process of ageing, which is more pronounced in very small and small settlements. Relatively normal age structure is about ¼ of the villages with poor – nearly one third, and severely degraded age structure – the other villages where the proportion of young people is below 10% and the adult population – more than 35%. Average ration of the rural population of the Municipality based on the three age groups is 14.2: 59.8: 26.0%. This structure is formed mainly of medium and some small settlements.

THE ratio between men and women marks a predominance of women. 100 men for every 109 women (average Shumen area – 105 for Bulgaria – 106). The situation is analogous to the urban population of the municipality (11 women per 100 men), while the rural population ratio is almost equal with a slight predominance of women (101 women per 100 men).

**THE** natural growth of the population of the Municipality is negative, but not as poor as its average parameters. In the last 5 years, it is in the range of – 2.8% to – 5.0%. Emigration dominated by the municipality, with the exception of 1999, when the mechanical growth was positive, albeit minimal. Typical of the municipality of Shumen, and the north-eastern region is that for the entire period the mechanical movement of the population has a negative. The observed tendency of highly educated individuals also applies to the three constituent components group (higher, higher specialized and secondary education) it is more pronounced in people with higher and secondary education. The main proportion of subjects with high levels of education are at the centre of the municipality – Shumen.

**IN** ethnic composition of the population, the most numerous is the Bulgarian ethnic group. Trends in population in recent years: a gradual decrease of the population, negative natural growth rate and normal age structure, differentiated by settlements, increasing the educational level of the population.

**THE** main priorities for the future demographic development of Shumen should be: keeping the population; limiting adverse trends in demographic processes; continuing trend of increasing the educational level of the population and its participation in various forms of training. Economically active population in the Municipality are 50 222 people (2004). The economic activity rate is 57.2% (the ratio of the economically active population and the population aged 15 and over). This indicator of the Municipality is higher than the national average (55.3%) and the region (56.7%) and similar to that of North-Eastern Region (57.5%).

**THERE** are changes in the employment by industry sector. An increase in the share of employment in the tertiary sector (services). In the primary sector (agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing) share of employment decline, and in the secondary sector (mining and quarrying, manufacturing and distribution of electric and thermal energy, gas and water, construction) after a period of decline the last three years was registered growth. The sector has the highest share of employment in manufacturing (38.8% of total employees). The unemployment rate in the Municipality is lower than the national average (12.67%) (19.92%) and North-Eastern Region (16.59%). The majority of the other municipalities in the region with high unemployment (more than 1.5 times the national average).

**YOUTH** unemployment adversely affects their current and future development. The main reasons for high youth unemployment are: discrepancy between the number of graduates from schools with certain professions and specialities and actual demand in the labour market; requirements of employers to hire workers and specialists with experience and seniority; lack of qualifications, professional speciality and among the unemployed youth. The share of long-term unemployed (registered for more than one year) is 43% lower than the average for the region (58.1%) and the country (52.9%). These individuals are disadvantaged groups in the labourmarket, they make up nearly half of the unemployed in the municipality. Gradually they lose their work habits, skills and motivation and opportunities for employment are decreasing. For these reasons, are included in numerous national and regional employment programs.

**MOST** of the unemployed (55.4%) are women. 11,6% of the unemployed graduates. On the labour market without qualifications are registered 55.4% of the unemployed, with 22.5% working profession and unemployed professionals - 21%. Low skills and education for more than half of the unemployed have been an obstacle to their realization in the labour market.

Since 2005 in the Municipality unemployed are included in numerous national and regional programs for employment and training. The measures to promote employment are in accordance with the EPA.

**THE** main problems of the Municipality in the field of unemployment and that will affect the future, we believe are related to: - Unequal employment of the population of the municipality; - A high proportion of long-term unemployed and people with low education, no any speciality and profession. Our forecast is that in the next 30 years, trends in employment and unemployment outline increase the number of employees and a gradual reduction in unemployment. This will correspond to the implementation of national, regional and district employment programs and thus will remain stored population including labour personnel.

**OUR** more general forecast for the development of the town over the next 30 years, the population will decrease 8 - 10%. Not because the birth rate will decrease or increase mortality, but because young people will continue to look for jobs abroad. Surely there will be many new projects and the crisis will pass, but cannot compensate for jobs lost over the years. There will be high paid jobs, but they will be insufficient to meet the needs of job seekers. I think that it will continue to develop agriculture in the municipalities of the town. Will become a leading sector in the economy, including raising domestic animals and plants. But modern agricultural technology in an effort to create new varieties and breeds use any pesticides and fertilizers. They must dramatically increase yields, but at the same time some of them lead to damage to the environment and damage to the human health.

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