

**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF SOUTH CENTRAL
PLANNING REGION FOR THE PERIOD 2007-2013
(SUMMARY)**

Sofia, June 2005

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1. ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ECOLOGICAL STATUS OF SOUTH CENTRAL PLANNING REGION

The South central Planning Region is situated in the southern part of the Republic of Bulgaria. In its northern part it borders on the North Central Planning Region, and the central part of Stara Planina mountain presents a natural northern border of the region; in the east it borders on the South-East Planning region, in the west – on the South-West Planning Region, and in the south it borders on the Republic of Greece and the Republic of Turkey. Its territory encompasses six regions – Pazardjik, Plovdiv, Smolyan, Haskovo, Stara Zagora and Kyrdjali, including totally 69 municipalities.

The South Central Region's area is 27 516 square meters, which presents almost a quarter of the whole territory of the country – 24,79

1.1. POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHY

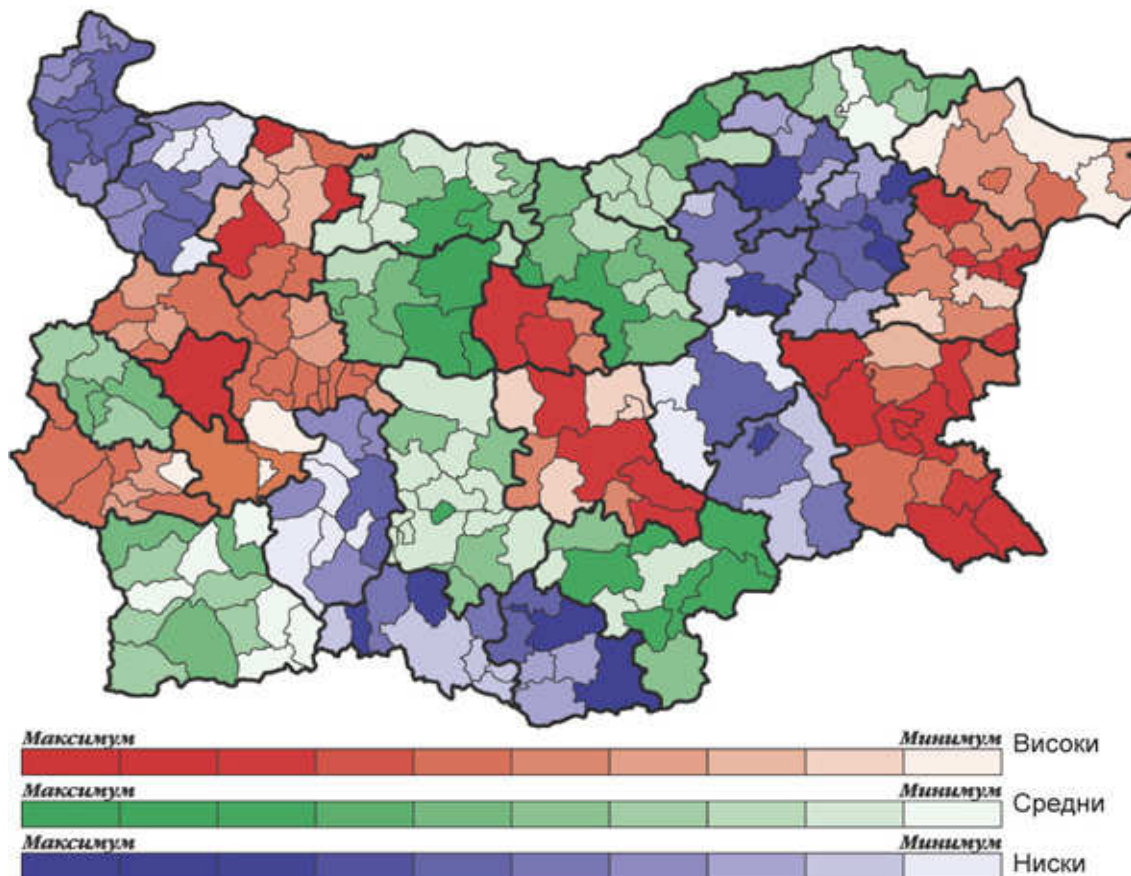
The analysis of the demographic development of the South Central Region applies the following main conclusions:

- South Central Region covers to a greater extent the average figures of the demography situation in the Republic of Bulgaria.
- The population is unequally distributed on its territory, and the lowest concentration is in mountain areas and the peripheral regions and municipalities on the boundary with the Republic of Greece.
- The age structure of the population is of regressive type. The active and reproductive population of the region is progressively decreasing.

1.2. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH CENTRAL PLANNING REGION

Picture 3. Map of the Gross Domestic Product index referring to regions and municipalities

Карта на индекса БВП по области и общини



Source: National Human Development Report – Bulgaria, 2002, UNDP

1.3.SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH CENTRAL PLANNING REGION

The level of the average annual unemployment in the South Central Region in the year 2003 is 14.91%.¹

The highest level of unemployment is mostly apparent in the Smolyan region. The lowest level of unemployment is in the Plovdiv Region.

1.4. FACTORS DETERMINING GROWTH, EMPLOYMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS

Human resources are the main factor determining competitiveness in a given region. Education is the key instrument to fight poverty and social isolation through providing the opportunity for equal access to pre-school preparation and elementary education for all people in the country independently of their ethnical belongingness, living place, health status or age.

¹ National Regional Development Strategy of RBulgaria for the period 2005–2015, p.13

Transport infrastructure and transport access. The general status of the road network (density, structure) could be determined as comparatively good, still having significant problems.

Table 3.Existing road network in different regions

	Highways	Class I	Class II	Class III	Municipal	Total
	km	km	km	km	km	km
Stara Zagora region	0	167,3	215,6	366,6	716,4	1465,9
Smolyan region	0	0	106	413,9	446,4	966,3
Plovdiv region	58,8	128,7	226,8	610,7	798,7	1823,7
Pazardjik region	50,8	59	202,6	412,5	403,2	1128,1
Kyrdjali region	0	77	25	500,4	445,8	1048,2
Haskovo region	20,7	161,2	102,6	773,6	722,5	1780,6
TOTAL:	260,6	1186,4	1757,2	6155,4	7066	16425,6

1.5. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ECOLOGICAL RISK EVALUATION

1.6 TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC COHESION OF TERRITORIES

Territorial and urban structure and town network

Typical for the whole country specifics of the town network are also apparent in the South Central Region: relevantly even distribution of small town and villages, and uneven distribution of big cities; territories of underdeveloped town network, often with low economic indexes, negative population growth mainly in villages and small towns, sometimes even in bigger ones.

1.7. SWOT ANALYSIS IN SOUTH CENTRAL PLANNING REGION

2.VISION, STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, PRIORITIES AND MESURES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH CENTRAL PLANNING REGION

2.1.VISION

SCR – a prospering European region of balanced development, based on local resources, a preferred place for living and business, of high living standards as a result of its competitive economy.

2.2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The strategic objectives of developing the SCR within the period 2007 – 2013 are as follows:

SO1. Reducing interregional differences and improving the living environment and business in the SCR through investing in physical and human capital;

SO2. Accession to the medium levels of development of EU regions, through increased competitiveness of the economy in the region, based on local resources, new technologies and innovations.

2.3. PRIORITIES AND MEASURES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

PRIORITY 1. Increasing competitiveness of the regional economy and the labour efficiency

MEASURES:

- 1.1. Developing research activities, technical development and innovations
- 1.2. Establishing business networks and clusters
- 1.3. Improving access to and development of information and communication technologies in the field of public services and business
- 1.4. Increasing access to and establishment of regional and local business infrastructure

PRIORITY 2. Developing and modernizing infrastructure and urban environment in the SCR

MEASURES:

- 2.1. Development and modernization of regional and local transport infrastructure
- 2.2. Development of technical infrastructure – water and sewage systems, energy networks, waste management
- 2.3. Development of technical infrastructure – information and computer communications (ICT)
- 2.4. Development of sustainable urban environment

PRIORITY 3. Improving social infrastructure in SCR

MEASURES:

- 3.1. Increasing attractiveness of SCR through investing in education
- 3.2. Improving health services referring closely to the development of regions
- 3.3. Supporting the accession of work force from economically underdeveloped regions and municipalities to the labour market
- 3.4. Social cares and services

PRIORITY 4. Preservation and sustainable utilization of nature and cultural heritage

MEASURES:

- 4.1. Consolidation the network of protected by the European Network “Nature 2000” areas and places.
- 4.2. Reducing and eliminating consequences of industrial pollution
- 4.3. Promoting and socializing nature and cultural heritage
- 4.4. Development of cultural industries
- 4.5. Transforming local cultural institutes in modern centers of culture

PRIORITY 5. Development of economy, based on local resources

MEASURES:

- 5.1. Development of tourism
- 5.2. Development of modern agricultural and forestry
- 5.3. Development of industry corresponding to local resources

PRIORITY 6. Developing sustainable institutional capacity at regional and local level envisaging improvement of management processes and supporting initiatives for regional and local development

MEASURES:

- 6.1. Increasing local capacity to impact the development of the region
- 6.2. Support initiatives for regional and local development
- 6.3. Development of trans-border cooperation

5.INDICATIVE FINANCIAL TABLE

The regional development plan of SC Planning Region envisages implementation of programmes and projects at a total budget of 2, 519 million BGN, which is comparatively allocated throughout all the years of the planning period.

6.ORGANIZATION OF SYSTEMS FOR MANAGEMENT, MONITORING, EVALUATION AND CONTROL OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1. Institutional organization of the system of managing the implementation of the RDP of SCR*
- 6.2. Monitoring, evaluation and updating the RDP*

7. APPLYING THE PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLE