

доц. д-р ЧАВДАР НИКОЛОВ

ЮГОЗАПАДЕН УНИВЕРСИТЕТ "НЕОФИТ РИПСКИ", гр. БЛАГОЕВГРАД

**SOME TERRITORIAL, SECTORIAL AND EDUCATIONAL DIMENSIONS
OF THE POVERTY IN BULGARIA**

Assoc. Prof. Ph.D. CHAVDAR NIKOLOV

SOUTH-WESTERN UNIVERSITY "NEOFIT RILSKI", BLAGOEVGRAD

Abstract: The occurring territorial and sectorial disproportions in the economy in the last years and the disproportions in the ethnic educational structure are the main reasons for the poverty in Bulgaria and its regional concentration. The agriculture proves as a very special and important sphere of poverty in the country.

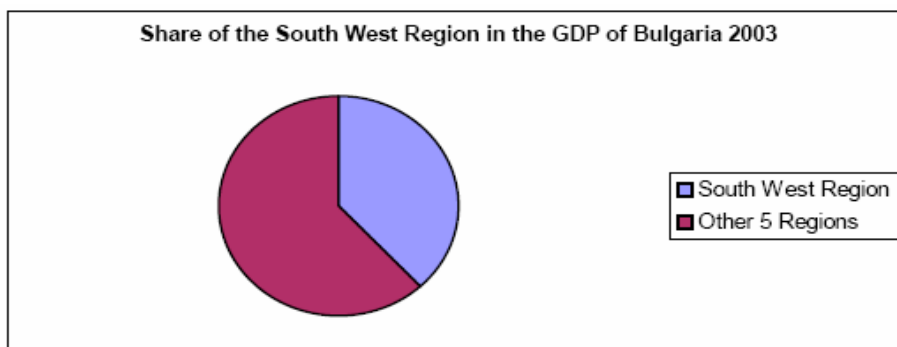
Key words: poverty, economic disproportions, ethnic educational structure

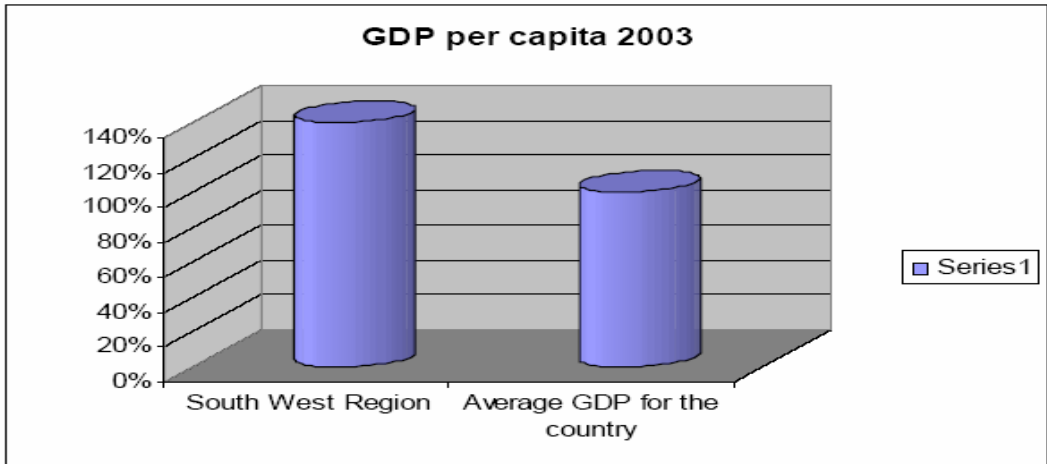
The poverty in South Eastern Europe has its many socio economic and historical roots. I would like to focus here on two main topics, where we could need specific solutions and may be some government could put them into practice.

First, the regional and sectorial disproportions in the development in Bulgaria, occurring in the last years. And second, the ethnic educational structure of the Bulgarian population.

My opinion is that all this, the disproportions and the educational structure are the main and specific sources of poverty in the society.

The regional development in Bulgaria since 1997 shows a significant concentration of the economic activity in the South West region, this is the region around the capital - Sofia. Some figures - the share of this region in the whole GDP of the country was 31.1% 1997 and went 2003 to 38.1%. As a result of this the correlation between the GDP per capita between the richest region and the average for the country changed from 1.2 in 1997 to 1.4 in 2003. The poorest region 2003 was the North Central and the distance in the GDP per capita to the South West region was 1.66.



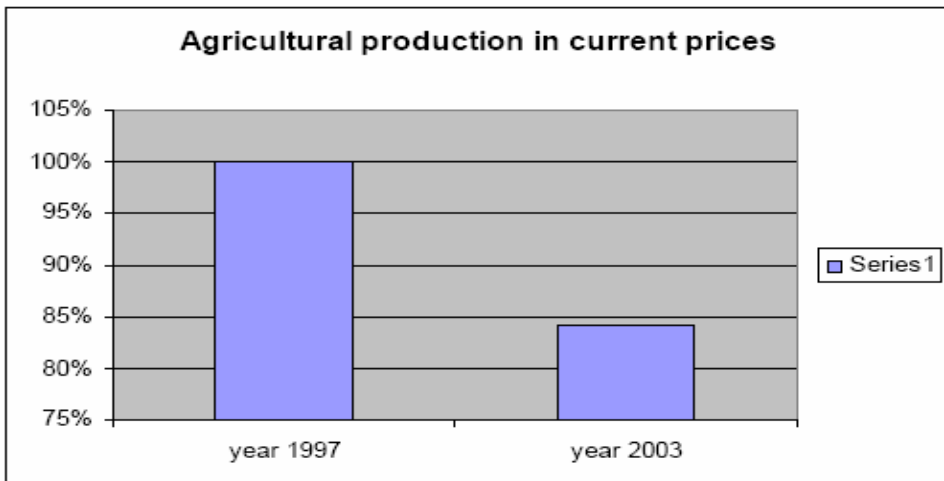


Such uneven development, called "removal of the economy towards Sofia" is causing serious problems in other regions especially in the North West and North Central Bulgaria. The migration and the emigration is now an everyday process. The social, economic and ecological costs of it are high. We have on the one hand overcrowded capital and on the other hand lagging behind regions with few inhabitants, with not significant economic activity and low incomes.

If there is a prescription for improving of the situation, it consists of two elements - infrastructure and investment. Both are

depending from the state activity, the infrastructure directly, the investment more indirectly but not less.

The agriculture is a sector with much tradition in the Bulgarian economy. Due to many factors, but on the first stage, due to the implemented in the mid 90-s restitutional revengist kind of reform, the agriculture is not only, as it would be normal, declining its presence in the GDP of the country from 26,2% in 1997 to 11,4% in 2003. In addition - the total agricultural production is falling in current prices with 15,8% for the same period.



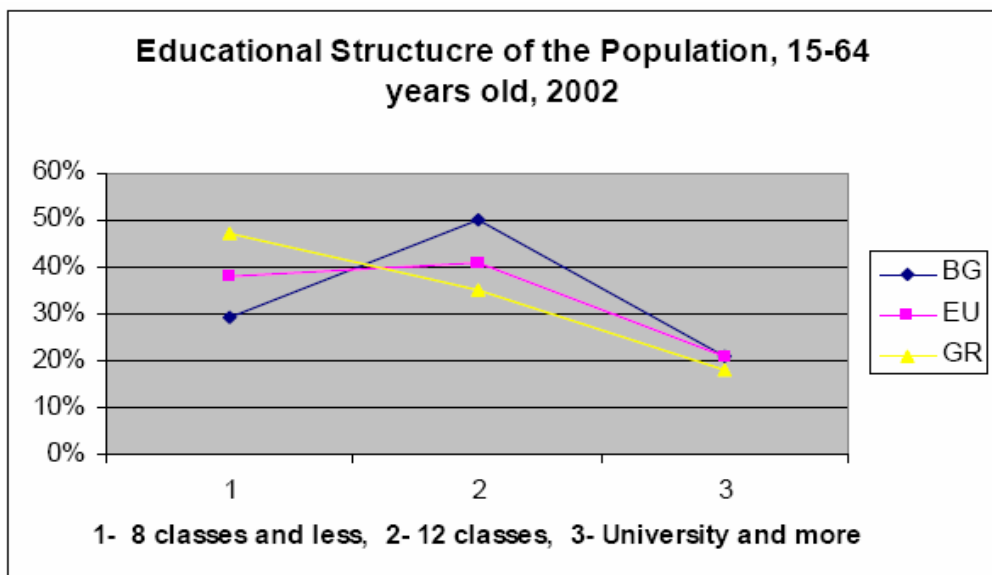
What it has to do with poverty in Bulgaria, we could see looking on the employment figures. In 1997 in the agriculture were 25.3% of the employees and in 2002 – 25.6%. So the agriculture is coming into view as a true sphere of poverty in Bulgaria. This role is getting even worse taking into account that the agriculture is traditionally used as a absorber of income shocks, especially to improve pensions, to guarantee some kind of existence in the time of unemployment and so on.

The evidences, that the uneven regional development and the stagnation in the agriculture are leading to poverty of the population, could be found in the sociological studies. They show that 51.5% of the inhabitants of the villages are poor, such are 33.1% of the people in the small cities, 25.8% in the medium cities and only 16.7% in the capital – Sofia.

I am quite pessimistic about the perspectives for the improving of the described situation, The improvement could come a little bit faster if the state interferes in the land market and supports on this way the compaction of the rural land. The scale of the contemporary farms doesn't allow the introducing of new modern technologies and is an other pillar of the poverty and primitivism in our society.

So we come to the third point of this text - the education. On the first glance we have in Bulgaria a society equal educated to these in the EU and even better educated than in some EU - countries. So the average educational structure of the population 25-64 years old in the European union looks as follows: 8 classes and lower -38%, 12 classes 41%, University -21%.

The respective figures in Bulgaria are looking quite good - 29%, 50% and 21%. In Greece they are 47%, 35% and 18% and in Portugal 79%, 11% and 9%.



However the Bulgarian situation looks otherwise by monitoring of the educational structure of the main ethnic groups.

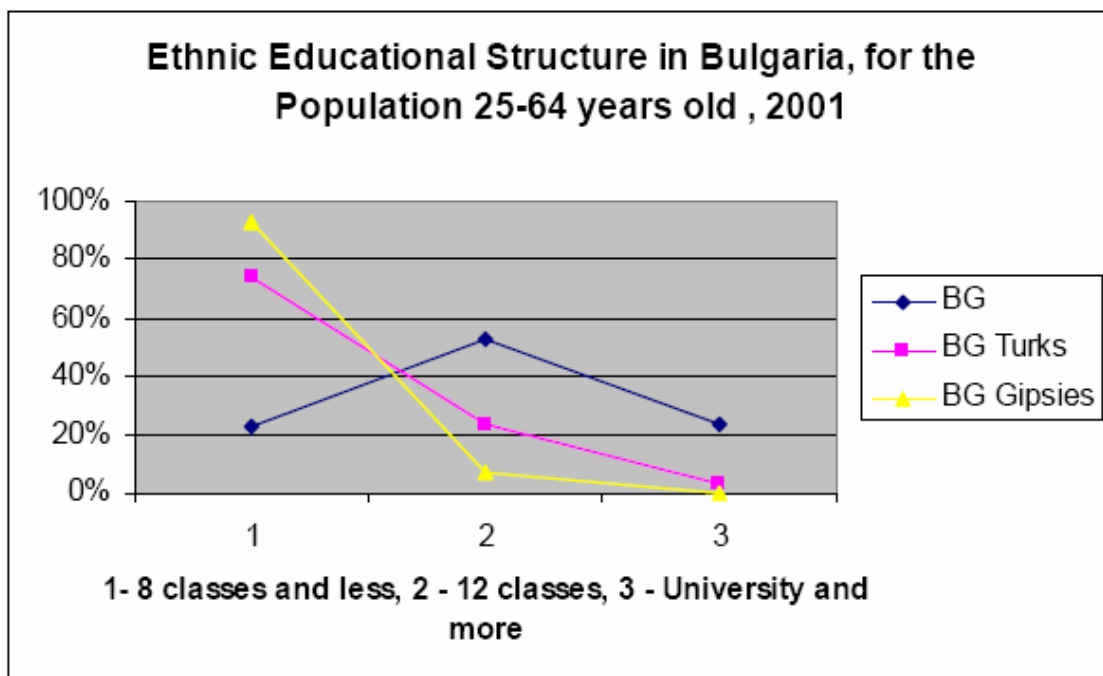
The Bulgarians have 23%, 53% and 24%. The illiteracy is 0.4%.

The Bulgarian Turks have respectively 74%, 23% and 3%. The illiteracy here lies

by 3%. Most concerning is the ethnic group of the Bulgarian Roma called also Gypsies. The figures we have for this group are 93%, 7% and 0% (0,3%). The illiteracy is 13%.

Looking at the figures illustrating the poverty it is not difficult to see that there is a direct dependence between the educational level and the poverty. In Bulgaria 81.0% of the people with less than 8 years education

are poor. The poverty concerns 51.7% of the people with 8 classes education, 23.4% - with 12 classes and only 14.2% with University education. 78.8% of the Gypsies belong to the poverty group, 58.3% of the Bulgarian Turks and 21% of the Bulgarians. The explanation of this situation lies in the educational level of each group



What I consider as a realistic solution for this sphere is that the education in Bulgaria has to develop to a subject for a national consensus and it has to get important ethnic priorities. On my opinion we have to fix the figure of 6% of GDP for the state budgetary expenses for education. A specific approach to the ethnic groups has

to be adapted. It has to include such a means as a establishing of boarding schools and all day schools. Of course this could be understood as some kind of limitation of the rights of parents over their children. But is it better for the society if the parents hinder the education of their children "preventing" them from the school?