



Sustainable Transport and Tourism along the Danube www.transdanube.eu

WP3: TRANSPORT & TOURISM SYSTEM ANALYSIS STATUS-QUO / STATE OF THE ART CARAS SEVERIN COUNTY, ROMANIA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Action 4.1.2.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Regional SoA Report

BASIC DATA OF THE REGION

Ruse District occupies the north-eastern part of the North Central Region of Bulgaria. Its administrative-territorial scope includes 8 municipalities: Borovo, Byala, Vetovo, Dve mogili, Ivanovo, Ruse, Slivo pole and Tsenovo.

Ruse region is predominantly lowland and hilly plain with an altitude of 300 m. The climate is humid continental. The average annual temperature is about 12 C°; the average July temperature is from 20 C° to 22 C°, and in January - from 0 C° to -3 C°.

The geographical location of the area is favourable as the region is crossed by two of the nine European transport corridors (№ 7 and № 9). These corridors connect Baltic Sea and the North Seas with the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.

Ruse is a major **transportation node**, where rail, road and water corridors are crossing. The Port of Ruse is one of the largest in the lower reaches of the Danube River. Near Ruse is situated the Danube Bridge. Currently the bridge is the only road connection between Bulgaria and Romania.

The geopolitical location of Ruse region provides wide opportunities for cross-border cooperation in the context of European regional policy.

The total **population** of Ruse District is 235,252 according to the last census in 2011. In the main administrative centre - Ruse the population is 148,502 inhabitants. Another important settlement in Ruse District is Ivanovo Municipality. It has a population of 9,414 people.

The **economy** of Ruse region is characterized by good social environment and living standard. In 2010 the employment rate is more favourable compared to the average for the country. In the period up to 2010 foreign direct investment in the area continued to increase each year, reaching 363 million euro. The area is characterized also by a relatively high number of registered enterprises, at the utmost because of the proximity to the river bridge. Tourism is one of the most important and promising economy sectors. Ruse region has a series of advantages as a tourist centre. In recent years the tourist flow to the municipalities in the region has steadily increased.

TRANSPORT SYSTEM

The connections of great importance are the roads **E-85** running parallel to Republican Road **I-5**, which goes across the Municipality of Ruse and the road connection through the Danube Bridge that makes the connection between Romania and Bulgaria.

The total length of the road network in Ruse District is 512 kilometres. It has a total of 495 km. asphalt covering, 2 km. of stone covering and 15 km. of roads that don't have any covering.

There is a lack of highways and the first category roads are only 3 with total length of 110 km. The current roads provide good quality of service and connect the District with all the main regions and municipalities in Bulgaria as well as with Romania and the Black Sea.

The town street network is mainly of linear pattern but in the central area, there are streets developed into a radial pattern. They are parts of the primary network but do not meet the required technical parameters. Another disadvantage is the weak connection of the south areas of the town with the central ones. The low number of “cross” connections between the linear streets is a weak point to the infrastructure, too.

The **Municipality of Ivanovo** is also a strategic transport point because of its north border (the Danube River), the two main European corridors that cross its territory and the railway line of international importance. Ivanovo is also known as a famous tourist destination - privileged to have three different modes of transport – water, road and railway.

The total number of the republican roads passing through the municipality is 5 with a total length of 86.9 km.

Public Transport

The system in Ruse Municipality uses the primary street network and part of the secondary one in the central area of the town. It is provided by fixed route trolleybuses, buses and minibuses. Except for the southeast residential areas, the rest benefit from relatively good public transport services.

There are 3 main companies that operate across the municipality – **EGGED** (35% of its shares belong to Ruse Municipality), **Chance-99** and **Geo-commerce**. The first one maintains mainly the trolleybuses, as for the other two – busses. The lines have very dense schedule – they arrive every 30 minutes, some of them arrive each hour. During the rush-hours some bus lines arrive every 5-10-15 minutes. The bus services could be divided into two, regarding the level on which the bus companies are working:

Regional level – 4 groups, regarding their frequency of access. Duration to 15 min. – Marten, Novo selo and Sandrovo; Duration to 30 min. – Basarbovo, Nikolovo and Chervena voda; Duration from 30 to 60 min. – Proseno, Semerdzhievo, Tetovo, DZS and Obrazcov chiflik; More than one hour – Dolna Ablanovo, Hotantsa and Yastrebovo.

National level - There are a lot of bus companies providing connection with the major cities in Bulgaria and neighbouring countries – Romania and Turkey. The main bus company is “**Union-Ivkoni**”. They provide buses to Sofia each one to two hours, which means very good connection to the capital and other destinations – Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Silistra and Razgrad. “**Etap-Group Plc.**” provides transportation from Ruse to Sofia with three buses every day. “**Ovanesovi**” also provides a bus line to Varna. They serve also the line Ruse-Bucharest once per day.

Railways

The system is of great importance, as it is a key transport and logistics point for the Danube region – combination of at least three available transport modes (water, rail and road). The overall length of the railway lines in Ruse District is 155 km.

The Ruse railway infrastructure consists of two main railway lines that pass through the town. The first line is *Ruse - Gorna Oryahovitsa – Podkova* and it is part of the Pan-European corridor No. 9. The second railway line is *Ruse – Varna* and it connects the region with the Black Sea. Ruse railway infrastructure also includes the Central railway Station – for passengers, two rail yards for sorting, three rail yards for loading and unloading and one technical railway station.

The railway line **Ruse–Gorna Oryahovitsa–Podkova** is of great importance for the tourism in the region, as it passes through the territory of Ivanovo Municipality. The Municipality is a famous tourist destination in Ruse District. The railway line is also important as it connects the north and the south part of Bulgaria and it is also a connection to the Bulgarian border with Turkey.

There are two main issues in the Ruse railway infrastructure. The first one is connected to the European standards for transport corridors according to which the railway line *Ruse – Gorna Oryahovitsa – Podkova* should be expanded on at least a double track. The second issue is connected to the above statement concerning the importance of *Ruse – Varna* railway line.

The main railway operator is the **Bulgarian State Railways**, followed by **Deutsche Bahn Schenker Rail Bulgaria**. They are the main transport operators for passengers. There are also 4 other transport operators, which are specialized in freight transportation. Therefore this diversity of transport operators improves the quality of service offered by rail.

Bulgarian State Railways offers 4 types of trains – express train, fast train, passenger train and suburban passenger train.

The passengers can receive information or buy a ticket through the website of the Bulgarian state railways and the website of DB Schenker Rail Bulgaria. Traveller's information could be found on the website of the Tourist Information Centre – Ruse. Railway ticket information could be found also at the Central Railway Station – Ruse. The information is either in Bulgarian or in English, except for the website of DB Schenker, where you could find information in German.

Water Transport, Ports Infrastructure

The river bank line of Ruse is 25 km long, from km 505 to km 480. There are two major transport companies – the **Bulgarian River Shipping** and **Rubiships**, and a number of private businesses. There are 12 ports and port terminals, grouped in 3 types:

1. Port terminal, part of Ruse national public transport port: Ruse-East, Ruse-West, Ruse-Centre;
2. Regional public transport ports: Pristis, Danube Dredging Fleet, W Co, Ruse Free Zone, Port Bulmarket-Ruse, Arbis Crude Oil Terminal;
3. Special ports: the Executive Agency for Exploration and Maintenance of the Danube River, Ruse Shipyard, River Service.

INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Tourist Information Centre operates a website for facilitating the tourists. The site includes a variety of information. It presents information in separate sections about:

- The geographical location of Ruse region;
- The cultural and historical heritage of the region;
- Hotels, Restaurants, Museums, Travel agencies in Ruse, Banks and exchange offices.

The site is available in Bulgarian and English.

TOURISM SECTOR

The tourist flow in Ruse region is characterized by distinct local characteristics in terms of tourist numbers, nights spent, share of foreign tourists. The statistics for Ruse are in line with the national general trend of decline in 2009 and 2010. However a slight growth is observed in 2011. As of December 2011 the region offers 1,944 beds in 73 accommodation sites – including hotels, motels, private rooms, guest houses, family hotels and bungalows. The main tourist flow passing through the city of Ruse comes from riverboats tourism. Tourist groups are mainly from the United States, Japan and Western Europe.

Main Touristic Offers

A tourist guide to the most important attractions and sites in the Municipality of Ruse selects eight itineraries covering almost all opportunities for cultural, religious, rural and ecotourism in the region.

Tourists can request a tour guide, and in addition, for most of the distant sites in the municipality transportation can be ensured. These services are provided by the Regional History Museum in Ruse.

Marketing strategies

According to the Bulgarian Tourism Law, each year the Municipal Council - Ruse adopts a program for the tourism development in the Municipality of Ruse. As part of the implementation of that plan in Ruse are organized:

- **Tourism Fair "Tourism Weekend"** and **Tourist Animation Festival** taking place in May;
- Participation in national and international tourism exhibitions for presenting the opportunities for tourism in Ruse region - **Bucharest Tourism Fair** in March, "**Vacation**" Tourism Fair in Sofia, "**Cultural Tourism**" Fair in Veliko Tarnovo, etc.

In connection with the presentation of tourism opportunities in the region are published many brochures for tourist attractions, maps, special advertising and informational guide for each of the four seasons and guides for tourist itineraries in different languages - Bulgarian, English, German, French, Spanish, Russian, and Romanian.

A Tourist Information Centre, situated in downtown Ruse, provides information about natural landmarks, cultural heritage, hotels and restaurants, travel agencies and cultural events in Ruse region.

Key stakeholders of tourism development in Ruse region are:

- Local authorities managing the tourism infrastructure - entertainment areas, road and street network and other transportation facilities, public buildings, sports facilities, etc.;
- Institutions organizing festivals, concerts, sports events, exhibitions, etc.;
- Representatives of tourism business - tour operators, hotels and restaurants owners, retailers of souvenirs, transportation companies, tourism associations, etc.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In Bulgaria, the national policy for tourism development sets aims for:

- Promoting regional partnerships;
- Supporting the setting up and operation of regional tourism organizations for the management of tourism regions;

- Creating regional tourism products;
- Monitoring and analysis of tourism development in the area.

Cultural tourism complemented by cruise, river, ornithological, wine-tasting and adventure tourism are listed as potentials of the Bulgarian Danubian tourist region.

What will be further needed are the following:

- A transnational approach highlighting the added value and possibilities of cross-border and inter-regional cooperation
- A strategic approach highlighting, besides the objectives, the proposed and planned and foreseen interrelated actions towards the attainment of the set aims.

The existing frameworks are characterized by strong and weak points. Several good decisions and ideas are either going to be implemented, or about to be developed. The **Strategy for Development of the Transport Sector** till 2020 would introduce the term “urban mobility” – automatically allowing a new set of possible actions and reforms. A web portal and a mobile application are introduced, as a result of a cross-border initiative and cultural one.

In the document entitled “Operational program regional development, priority Axis 3: Sustainable development of tourism, Operation 3.1. Development of tourist attractions and related infrastructure, Danubian municipalities are highlighted as high and potential tourist destinations deserving concentrated development of infrastructure and services.

The national funding schemes and the financing tourism development and transport projects appear as active involvement in EU projects – Municipality of Ruse possesses a very skilled project team, capable of extensive problem-solving. The participation of Bulgaria in the EU’s Danube Strategy is focused on tourism and accessibility – the strategy and the adopted Action plan will serve as basis for developing the national strategic framework.

Regarding the legal frameworks, there is no strong integration of tourism and transport policy promoting sustainable ways of transportation in tourism areas. Some laws could be deemed as relevant to the topic but nothing specific. The decision making body, dealing with mobility, has very low capacity. A big problem presents the former socialist legacy that is still imbedded in the planning legislation and practice. There simply are no laws or acts that could be applied for the field of information systems – only two laws were adopted by the Ministry – on electronic commerce and on electronic governance. The educational system is also problematic, as there have never been studied any sustainable modes of transportation in tourism. No proper laws exist on a legal basis, the relevant framework should be elaborated.

CONCLUSIONS

Ruse Region is an example of a region with very prosperous perspective for the near future. All the necessary “ingredients” for successful introduction of the sustainable mobility modes in tourism exist or have been thought of. The infrastructure has some weak points but it manages well with the current transportation needs and after a few improvements there would definitely be no serious problems in implementing any of the forthcoming ideas and measures.