

## Attractiveness of the Vranovsko micro-region as a tourist locality

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to explore tourism as an alternative way for development of the Vranovsko micro-region. Most popular forms of tourism characterized for this region and main attractive places are described in this paper. Research was conducted to detect current economic situation of providers of tourism services, their problems, threats and opportunities for future development. For this purpose providers of tourism services from two municipalities of Vranovsko micro-region were asked to fill out the questionnaire. It was found, that all respondents consider, that tourism is a perspective way for development of their micro-region.

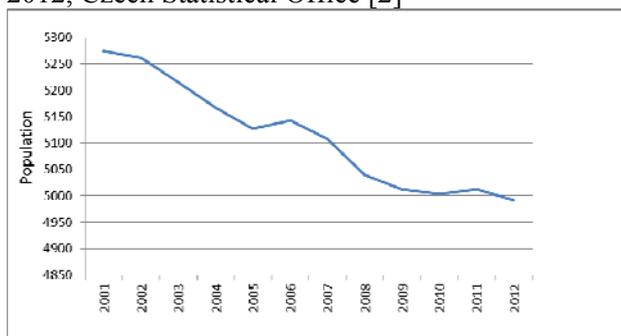
**Key-Words:** - Vranovsko micro-region, tourism, Podyjí National Park, Water reservoir Vranov

### Introduction

Vranovsko micro-region is situated at Znojmo District in the south-western part of the Czech Republic and its area is 21,975 ha. This micro-region borders with Austria and its center is Vranov nad Dyjí. The association of municipalities of Vranovsko was created 7 September, 1998, and it consists of 21 villages, namely Bítov, Chvalatice, Korolupy, Lančov, Lesná, Lubnice, Onšov, Oslovice, Podhradí nad Dyjí, Podmyče, Stálky, Starý Petřín, Šafov, Štítary, Šumná, Uherčice, Vranov nad Dyjí, Vratěšín, Vysočany, Zálesí and Zblovce [1].

Villages of Vranovsko are small, they have limited own activities and they are situated far from all regional centres both in Czech and Austrian sides. Because of these factors the micro-region has emigration tendencies [1]. As it is seen in the graph 1, population of the region decreased. Now the population is 4,992 inhabitants [2]. So population has declined of 5% for the last 10 years.

Fig. 1 Population development in the years 2001 - 2012, Czech Statistical Office [2]



That's why it is necessary to look out an alternative way for the development of Vranovsko micro-region. Tourism can be one of the solutions for this problem.

Tourism is already an important feature of the rural economy in Europe. EuroGites (the European rural tourism umbrella group) calculated that tourism supports more than 1.300.000 direct and indirect jobs in Europe, and generates more than 100.000 million EUR in gross income each year [3].

Moreover rural tourism has positive impacts on [4]:

- reversing of depopulation (employment, attracting in-migration);
- new skills and training for inhabitants;
- housing (the building sector grows);
- service retention (tourism increases the local market for services);
- employment opportunities for women;
- environment (justification of rural tourism provides the conservation of Europe's rural landscapes, ecosystems, built environments, communities and cultures);
- socio-cultural relations (the recognition and celebration of past ways of life);
- creating a focus for regional planning.

The micro-region disposes with conditions for such forms of tourism as sightseeing tourism, water recreation and cycling.

The Water reservoir Vranov is a popular place for water tourism there. Tourists have possibilities for recreation, water sports, fishing and swimming. Many camps and guesthouses are situated here.

National park Podyjí is the next attraction of the micro-region. Podyjí represents the smallest national park in the Czech Republic [5].

Vranovsko micro-region is attractive for tourists not only by its flora and fauna but also by plenty of cultural-historical monuments, such as castles (The chateau in Vranov nad Dyjí, The Bítov castle, The ruins of castles Cornštejn and Frenštejn) and remains of mill (Lesná, Uherčice).

Village Vratěnin got a title of Village of the Year in 1996 and it was declared a rural reservation zone. Vratěnin has 24 protected historical monuments.

So Vranovsko is attractive for tourists both by its nature and by cultural-historical monuments and has a large potential in this field.

### Material and Methods

Tourist infrastructure in micro-region is not completely developed. Basic comparably good standard elements for accommodation and meals are located in Vranov nad Dyjí, Bítov, Chvalatice, Podhradí nad Dyjí and Štítary. But supplementary and entertainment services are here in lack. Information sector actively develops. Vranovsko's Tourist information center (TIS) is situated in Vranov nad Dyjí.

The highest number of tourist accommodation facilities are located in Vranov nad Dyjí, its number is 14. Summertime pensions prevails here, they have 50 rooms as maximum. Additionally three three stars hotels can be found here. There are Hotel under Castle, Castle Hotel and the biggest one Military sanatorium Dyje with maximum capacity of 100 rooms.

Three pensions, three cottage settlements, two tourist accommodations and one camp are located in Štítary, together it is 12 objects. Nine accommodation objects works in Bítov, there are 1 three stars hotel (Hotel Bítov), 2 pensions, 1 camp and 3 cottage settlements. Total number of collective accommodation establishments in Oslovice is 6, they consists of one pension (Pension Under castle), three cottage settlements and other accommodations.

Lančov, Podhradí nad Dyjí, Chvalatice, Lesná a Vysočany have from 1 to 5 collective accommodation establishments.

The highest number of catering objects are concentrated in Vranov nad Dyjí (U Vodnáře, Hotel's restaurant, Under Castle, Parník, Formosa Restaurant, Country salon, Castle's Hotel Restaurant, Herold restaurant, Pážecí dům Restaurant, Přehrada restaurant, Brusel restaurant, Titanic Restaurant).

For evaluation of the current situation of Vranovsko's tourism potential two municipalities were selected. There were Vranov nad Dyjí and Bítov (fig.2).

Fig. 2 Overview map of Bítov and Vranov nad Dyjí (Znojmo district), Czech Statistical Office [6]



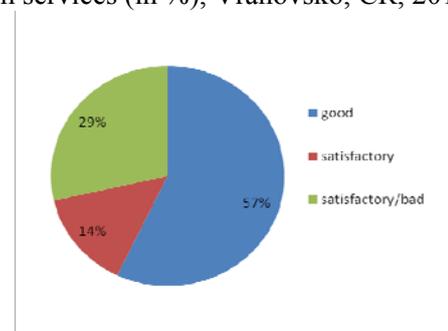
Questionnaire survey of accommodation and catering objects was carried out in these municipalities. The questionnaire contained questions about long-term economic situation of providers, the structure of visitors and reasons of visiting, main problems and opportunities for future development. The total number of asked subjects was 64. And only 7 agreed to answer questions (mainly there were accommodations - pensions).

Within the project not only questionnaire survey was done, but also interviews with providers of tourism services were carried out.

### Results and Discussion

According to the survey, which was done from June till September 2014, more than half of providers of tourism services found their long-term economic situation as good (fig. 3).

Fig. 3 Long-term economic situation of providers of tourism services (in %), Vranovsko, CR, 2014

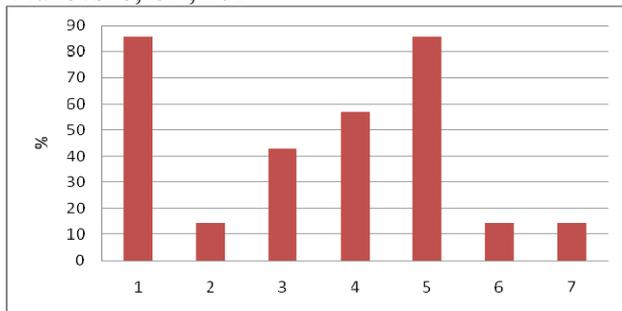


In the same time almost 30% of respondents determine their situation between satisfactory and

bad. These results have been plotted on the pie chart.

Respondents consider, that higher percent of Vranovsko's visitors are families with children and active visitors (for sports - hiking, biking). Next important groups consist of pensioners and students. The structure of Vranovsko's visitors shows chart (fig. 4).

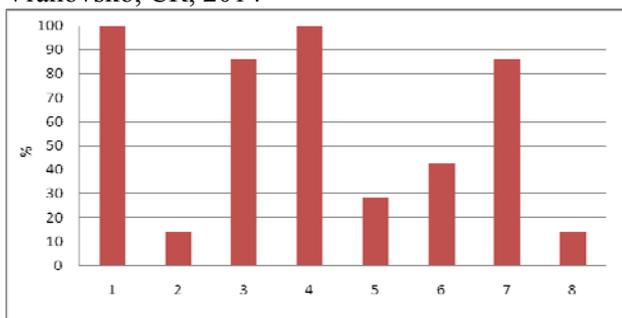
Fig. 4 The structure of Vranovsko's visitors (in %), Vranovsko, CR, 2014



Legend: 1 - families with children, 2 - economically active people, 3 - young people - students, 4 - pensioners, 5 - active visitors, 6 - passive visitors, 7 - cottagers.

Next chart presents main reasons to visit Vranovsko. So as it is seen in figure 5, people visit this region because of holiday, protected areas (National park Podyji), biking and historical monuments.

Fig. 5 Reasons why tourists visit Vranovsko (in %), Vranovsko, CR, 2014



Legend: 1 - holiday, 2 - conferences and seminars, 3 - history, 4 - biking, 5 - wine tourism, 6 - sightseeing tourism, 7 - protected areas, 8 - visit concrete accommodation or catering object.

During interviews with providers of tourism services it was found, that the main problem of tourism in this region is its extreme seasonality. There are no conditions for the winter tourism in the area.

Owners of pensions in Vranov nad Dyjí complained, that parking isn't here. And only one large parking is situated in 500 m from the Castle.

Also playground for children is absent in the town. The problem relates to the insufficient place in a relatively narrow canyon where the commune is situated.

Expected reconstruction of the dam crest represents one of the main threats. This would lead to stop of transit from the Camp Vranov beach to town and to Castle in Vranov nad Dyjí for 2-3 years. Similarly a limitation of the shipping evoked by the disagreement between the operator and the landscape protection could hinder the connection between two most visited attractiveness (Vranov chateau and Bítov castle).

Moreover providers of tourism services are afraid of economic crisis.

The high quality of environment of all tourist destination is perceived as the main strength whereas the subsidies into tourism is considered as a mayor opportunity.

In the same time respondents think, that permission of water tourism on the river Dyje would improve the situation. And all the service providers agreed, that tourism is a perspective for the Vranovsko micro-region.

## Conclusion

Vranovsko is a micro-region, which consists of 21 communities. It is a periphery region and because of that it has emigration tendencies and the population of region decreases. However one of the main goals of Association of Vranovsko's communities is development of tourism in region, so it can be a good solution.

The peripheral nature of the micro-region is caused not only by the distance from regional centers but also by the position on the borderland. The border was a part of the iron curtain for almost 40 years. It was like the end of the World that time. Even today the border is hardly impassable due to the national conditions (relatively deep canyon of the Dyje River and due to the highest level of the landscape protection within the National Park Podyjí/Thayatal on both sides of the border.

Last historical development of the micro-region was loaded with the post-war ethnically based population exchange. The relationship of the new settlers to their villages, regions and neighbors created for a long time step by step. Moreover the Austrian communes on the opposite side of the borderline are partly in a similar situation. That is why certain hopes in cross-border collaboration have been not fulfilled. The quality of social capital is reflected by the fact that no Local Action Group has been created in the micro-region till this time.

To recapitulate, the main tourist attractions of Vranovsko are the Water reservoir Vranov, National park Podyjí and historical monuments (the chateau in Vranov nad Dyjí, the Bítov castle, State chateau Uherčice, the ruins of Cornštejn and remains of mills).

To evaluate tourism situation in Vranovsko the survey of providers of tourism services was done. From the survey follows, that Vranovsko is visited mainly by families with children and active visitors. The main reasons for visiting of Vranovsko are holiday, protected areas (National park Podyjí), biking and historical monuments.

Nevertheless more than 57% of respondents have good long-term economic situation, they have many complications and threats. For example, tourism in region has extremely seasonal character, parking and playground for children are absent in Vranov nad Dyjí and many problems are connected with protection of river Dyje. At the same time respondents hope for business support of tourism in Vranovsko.

To conclude, the survey and interviews suggested, that Vranovsko micro-region is a perspective tourism area. But due to the seasonal limitation and some other problems, it is not possible to expect that the micro-region could survive from the tourism only. Following activities could be recommended: agriculture on relative fertile soils (but with relatively high productivity, which results in decreasing jobs), energy production from renewable sources, elaboration of local products. All these branches are not able to ensure sufficient employment in the micro-region.

Unfortunately, although Vranovsko is strictly rural area, there are no conditions for the farm tourism development [see e.g. 7]. There are almost no family farms which are a necessary prerequisite for its development.

That is why the depopulation will probably continue. It could change into structural demographic changes (emigration of young and educated people and immigration of seniors) which should result in the aging. Also villages (especially the smallest and less accessible) could change from living settlement into concentration of second homes (cottages), later used for permanent residences. It would be accompanied by attenuation of service – which would be unpleasant for the tourism development.

The aging could cause a development of services for seniors. The problem consists in the fact that

seniors often perceive tourism as an undesirable element.

On the other hand, the peripheral position protects the borderland settlements from intensive changes of rural to urban character [8].

In any case, next development of the Vranovsko micro-region is worth for further investigation. As the most peripheral micro-region in the South Moravian Region, Vranovsko could be a case study of possible negative manifestations and consequences of the peripheral nature.

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