Demographic perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina is in an unfavourable period of demographic development, in which the number of inhabitants is constantly decreasing. Demographic trends are similar to those of neighbouring countries and are characterized by a decreasing number of children born, an increase in mortality, intensive aging of the population and constant emigration, mostly of the young and reproductive population. Between the two censuses, from 1991 to 2013, the population decreased by approximately 20%. Bosnia and Herzegovina has been affected by natural depopulation for fifteen years. Since 2007, this depopulation has manifested itself in negative natural growth, which is a consequence of a decrease in the birth rate and a constant increase in the mortality rate. The bad demographic picture is additionally damaged by the negative migration balance, so the total depopulation has large proportions. Currently, about half of the population born in this country lives abroad, and according to some estimates, about 0.7% of the population moves out of BiH every year. Migrations cause uneven distribution of the population, which leads to the demographic growth of cities and marked depopulation of villages. Significant spatial and demographic polarization and unequal population distribution hinder coordinated regional development and functional spatial sustainability. The decrease in the number of inhabitants is accompanied with the abandonment of certain geographical areas below the threshold of rational costs of providing services, which creates a negative spiral of insufficient development and the continuation of the decline in the number of inhabitants. All population projections indicate that further population decline in BiH is an unstoppable process. The consequences of that process are far-reaching. Population decline means a reduction in the human capital needed for development. Based on the projected period until 2050, it could be concluded that Bosnia and Herzegovina will have negative demographic consequences, which will create multiple challenges for society.

**Keywords:** demographic development, depopulation, Bosnia and Herzegovina.