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## **DIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS OF THE KONECKI POWIAT**

### **Summary**

This study outlines the diversification of social and economic development in selected municipalities of Konecki Powiat of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. It is based on statistical data contained in available statistical sources published by the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS). Social and economic development has been assessed in connection with characteristics of population and economy. The period of transformation triggered numerous phenomena facilitating development of rural areas; however, it also introduced negative social and economic processes. The analysis emphasized the existence of numerous alarming demographic and social phenomena, which are the strongest on the outskirts of the Konecki Powiat. The population has dropped, partially due to declining birth rate. Moreover, in the analyzed period of time the outflow of population has decreased, presumably due to slumping urban labour market. Furthermore, in the area of this study ageing of population has been discovered as a result of decreased fertility and longer life expectancy. Social and economic transformations have considerable impact on changes in the labour market. With decreased industrial employment, the rate of unemployment has risen. Within all unemployed the most numerous group is composed of people at the age of 25-34. Unfavourable unemployment structure is preserved due to educational barriers for the population of rural areas. The second serious problem is inability to pull oneself together in the new reality. In order to overcome this negative phenomenon it is vital to find new ways of stimulating activity of the population. In the late few years the number of registered private business entities increased with the greatest group in trade and repairs. This is connected with relatively low costs of establishing such businesses. It should be noted that the development of the Konecki *Powiat* is diversified. Far better parameters related to description of demographic, social and economic phenomena are recorded in rural areas near towns than in municipalities located on the outskirts of the *Powiat*.

**Key words:** rural areas, birth rate, migrations, unemployment, business entities

## INTRODUCTION

Systemic transformation and ongoing European integration emphasized increasing importance of particular local and regional systems to development policies. Settlement system plays a significant role in regional systems, including subsystem of small urban and rural centres. Those areas have an important influence on trends in local development with the quantitative dimension stimulating regional development. They are essential elements of the landscape, economy as well as social and cultural life (Heffner 2005).

The goal of this study is to present diversity of social and economic development in municipalities of the Konecki Powiat of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. The analysis is based on the statistical data contained in statistical sources published by the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS) for the period of 2000-2005.

The Konecki Powiat is located in the north-western part of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (Fig. 1). According to regional physical and geographical division of Poland the Konecki Powiat is located in the province of



Figure 1. Administrative division of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship

Wyżyna Małopolska, subprovince of Wyżyna Środkowomałopolska (Kondracki 2000). It is a part of macroregion of Wyżyna Przedborska with mesoregions: Wzgórza Opoczyńskie and Wzgórza Łopuszańskie, and a part of macroregion of Wyżyna Kielecka with mesoregions: Garb Goleniowski and Płaskowyż Suchedniowski.

In the south the Konecki Powiat borders on the Włoszczowski Powiat and Kielecki Powiat, and in the east on the Skarżyski Powiat. In the north-east it is surrounded by the Przysuski and Szydłowiecki Poviats from the Mazovian Voivodeship and in the north-west by Opoczyński and Radomszczański Powiat from the Łódzkie Voivodeship. The area of the Konecki Powiat amounts to 1,140 km<sup>2</sup> (9.7% area of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship), being the third largest poviat (after Kielecki and Jędrzejowski Poviats) in the voivodeship. On December 31, 2006, the population of the poviat amounted to 84,036 (6.6% of the voivodeship population) with 31.7% in urban areas and 68.3% in rural areas.

#### **CHANGES IN POPULATION DENSITY**

According to A. Rosner (2005) rural area is diversified to a considerable degree in many respects and for this reason rural aggregate treated as a whole (economic, social and cultural) does not reflect the complexity of the problem. Therefore the analysis concerning directions of development of rural areas is complicated, as particular regions of Poland require different directions of development and different stimulants. Studies on spatial diversification of rural areas showed that the studied municipalities of the Konecki Powiat belong to so-called problematic areas and extremely problematic, where many alarming phenomena occur, resulting from monofunctionality of rural areas and unfavourable demographic, social and labour structure. Taking into consideration Poland as a whole, rural population in 2000 was almost the same as at the beginning of the decade (percentages remained unchanged); however, its dynamics in the period of 1990-2000 in particular regions of Poland was diversified ranging from 0.8% decline in the Podlaskie Voivodeship to 1.0% increase in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship (Potrykowska 2002). As for changes in population density of towns and municipalities of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, some trends have been noted. In the period of 1990-2005 the population of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship decreased by 1.7%. Moreover, in this period urban population gained 26,400 inhabitants, whereas rural areas lost 48,100 people. Population growth in urban areas amounted to 5.02% with a 6.5% decrease in rural areas. The distribution of population in the areas of this study is uneven. The average population density is 114 persons/km<sup>2</sup>. As a result of industrialization processes of the late 1960s and early 1970s the greatest density values are noted in municipalities located in the vicinity of Kielce and other towns of the southern and northern parts of the voivodeship. The least densely populated rural areas may

be found in the outskirts and in the middle part of the voivodeship. These areas are usually characterised by poor agricultural conditions, underdeveloped transport system and considerable afforestation rate.

In the analyzed period of 2000-2005, the population of the Konecki Powiat has decreased by 3.9% and in 2005 amounted to 84,483 inhabitants. Nowadays the number of inhabitants depends on numerous factors coming from conditions of area development after the Second World War and social, economic and political transformations after 1989. Analysis of the figures from the study supports the statement that in the forthcoming years the migration to rural areas located mainly in suburban zone with well-developed technical infrastructure (Gowarczów, Końskie, Smyków) will continue, whereas such municipalities like Ruda Meleniecka and Słupia Konecka may become depopulated. Current loss in rural population results from negative birth rate and migration growth.

While analysing processes of demographic development of municipalities of the Konecki Powiat, the role of birth rate and migration has been emphasized. The importance of birth rate for the size of population in rural areas has decreased. It is proved by the studies of A. Potrykowska [2002] who showed that the most significant decrease in number of inhabitants of rural areas was recorded in eastern, central and south-western parts of Poland, mainly in Podlaskie, Lubelskie and Świętokrzyskie Voivodeships. These regions are traditionally depopulating areas, which nowadays form the basis of so-called rural problematic areas that require agricultural restructuring and multifunctional development. In the studied years, a decline in size of the population of the whole Konecki Powiat was noted (table 1).

**Table 1.** Natural movement of the population of the Konecki Powiat in the period of 2000-2005 (<sup>0</sup>/<sub>100</sub>).

Items	2000				2005			
	Marriages	Births	Deaths	Birth rate	Marriages	Births	Deaths	Birth rate
Konecki Powiat	6.0	9.5	10.2	-0.7	6.0	9.3	11.4	-2.1
Końskie	7.1	9.7	9.3	0.4	6.4	9.0	10.1	-1.1
Słupoków	4.9	7.5	10.6	-3.1	5.8	7.9	12.5	-4.7
Fałków	6.0	11.5	12.9	-1.4	8.0	9.0	12.4	-3.5
Gowarczów	4.8	8.7	9.9	-1.2	4.4	10.2	14.6	-4.4
Radoszyce	4.9	10.8	8.9	1.8	6.0	11.1	10.6	0.4
Ruda Maleniecka	7.0	10.8	12.9	-2.2	3.5	9.5	13.0	-3.5
Słupia Konecka	3.5	9.1	13.6	-4.5	4.1	9.3	14.2	-4.9
Smyków	7.9	12.5	12.0	0.5	6.5	14.3	11.1	3.2

Source: Statistical yearbooks of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship 2001, 2006

The smallest losses were in the following municipalities: Słupia Konecka, Stąporków and Gowarczów, and in the municipality of Smyków there was an increase in the birth rate in comparison with the year 2000. Insignificant rise in birth rate is a result of decreased fertility and increased mortality. Lower birth rate in consecutive years is a product of various social transformations. There has been a significant rise in the number of women active on the labour market, who are more concentrated on improving their professional qualifications. The age of getting married has also increased. In Poland the frequency of first marriages has been declining and decision concerning getting married is postponed, which limits the process of creating new families [Strzelecki 2001]. Family planning, upbringing, offspring education according to financial means have been more and more popular. Important reasons for low birth rate include the knowledge of reproductive cycle and methods of family planning. Moreover, the state has not introduced appropriate population policy which could improve birth rate. This negative phenomenon not only causes a drop in the population size, but also deforms the population structure according to age and adversely affects ageing of the society [Kiniorska 2007].

Apart from birth rate, the second element affecting changes in population size are migrations resulting from various social and economic transformations, which have a considerable impact on demographic image of micro- and macro-regional units. Differences in intensity, direction and structure of migrants depend not only on the level of social and economic development, but also on history and tradition of former spatial connections between regions [Warych-Juras 2002].

In 1990s and at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century migrations of population from rural to urban areas diminished. A drop in migration from rural areas to urban areas and increased population movement from urban areas to rural areas caused a negative balance of migration in towns and positive in rural areas, mainly in the vicinity of larger urban centres. Spatial distribution of migration balance per 1000 persons was diversified to a considerable degree. In the period of 1990-2005 the largest figures were recorded for rural areas located in the vicinity of the voivodeship city and urban centres of the north-western part of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. In the last few years the number of leaving the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship was greater than the number of new settlers by 2,000-2,500 people. Women are more prone to change the place of residence and they constitute 52% of all migrating population. The drop in the size of voivodeship population was neutralised by declining death rate (7.5% drop in comparison with 1995) and gradual increase in life expectancy. The Konecki Powiat still has a negative migration balance; however, in the last few years an increased inflow and decreased outflow of population were recorded. Positive migration balance is recorded in two municipalities: Gowarczów and Smyków. In the period of systemic transformation the migration outflow was stopped. This phe-

nomenon is probably a result of a slump on the urban labour market and limited possibilities of town settlement due to a shortage of capital for the purchase of flats [Jażewicz 2007].

Apart from migration the structure of population analysed according to sex and age is another key factor affecting the strength of components of natural population movement [Soja, Zborowski 2000]. In the last years the sex and age structure of the voivodeship population was similar to that of the whole Poland. In urban areas sex structure was far better balanced than in rural areas. There were 109 women per 100 men on average, and women superiority in numbers appeared from the age group of 30-34 years. In the population of rural areas men outnumbered women till the year 2000 and then the balance between sexes was recorded. Changes in size and structure of sexes result in changes in percentages of particular groups. Age structure of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship's population has still been deteriorating. There is an increase in the number of people at the post-working age, which is connected with constituents of birth rate and migration balance. The Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship belongs to regions with the highest percentage of people over 60 years old. There are significant differences between rural and urban areas. Analysing the population in the categories of pre-working, working and post-working age groups, there was a considerable increase in the number of people at the post-working age. This rise suggests a demographic process named as ageing of society. Main factors responsible for such changes are: still decreasing birth figures, prolonging life expectancy, shifting through next age groups generations of baby boomers and generations born during a period of population decline [Holzer 1999]. The process of population ageing in Poland is much slower than in other European countries. In 2000 an average European percentage of people over 60 amounted to 20%, whereas in Poland it was 16.5%. In the Konecki Powiat it exceeds 17%. The most advanced process of population ageing is in two municipalities: Ruda Maleniecka and Słupia Konecka.

## **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGES**

After 1990 the importance of education as a factor affecting the position of an individual on the labour market increased. A positive phenomenon which has been observed for a few years is a constant increase in the level of education of the population and one of factors facilitating such changes is a tough competition on the labour market. Since the beginning of transformation the rural and urban population of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship has become better educated immediately. Place of residence plays an important role as it diversifies the level of education. In rural areas of the Konecki Powiat changes in the level of education are results of former and present social and economic conditions. In the studied years there is a considerable decrease in the number of people with the

lowest level of education and a rise in the number of people with vocational, secondary and higher education (Stąporków[?]). This rise concerns mainly young people who are not running farms. As far as population connected with agricultural activities is concerned, 73.8% farm owners did not have farming qualifications, and 22% attended only farming courses. Lack of people with suitable farming education slows down dynamic structural changes in rural areas of the Konecki Powiat [Wrońska 2007].

Changes in social and economic reality caused by political transformation and introduction of market economy influenced the labour market. Employment is the most important element of social and economic development. Changes in employment, formation of ratios and proportions of particular jobs and sectors of economy are influenced by various factors (demographic, economic and social). In the Konecki Powiat, the employment rate dropped by 2.07%. Employment in the private sector became more important, but in particular municipalities it differs. Private sector domination is visible in the municipality of Końskie, Stąporków, Fałków and Smyków (table 2). Dynamic emerging of private entrepreneurs is a result of personal relations and connections of their owners as representatives. Relations between companies are often personal and informal, based on unwritten rights and obligations [Domański 1992]. Characteristic features of entrepreneurs and local factor in the form of social bonds and cooperation network based on trust are also important [Zuzańska-Żyśko 2006].

**Table 2.** Working people<sup>a)</sup> according to actual workplace in municipalities of the Konecki Powiat in 2005

Items	Total	Public sector	Private sector	Industry and construction	Market services	Non-market services
Konecki Powiat	12638	5714	6924	5858	2494	4067
Końskie	8915	3965	4950	4489	1712	2692
Stąporków	1912	716	1196	757	528	552
Fałków	347	139	208	190	44	107
Gowarczów	180	138	42	27	31	92
Radoszyce	488	321	167	122	87	268
Ruda Maleniecka	285	149	136	110	52	90
Słupia Konecka	235	192	43	20	9	182
Smyków	276	94	182	143	31	84

Source: Statistical yearbook of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship 2006.

a) Working people excluding business entities with less than 9 employees and working in individual farms in agriculture.

Unemployment is a significant barrier to stimulate the economy of rural areas. Economic and social changes observed after 1989 significantly influenced the change in professional activity of the population. Vocational activity has decreased, the main factors being limited number of jobs and rising unemployment. The greatest increase in unemployment was recorded in municipalities of the northern part of the voivodeship and in the suburban zone of Kielce. One of elements responsible of the increased unemployment was the number of layoffs of commuters. Unemployment analysis concerning rural areas of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship showed that since the beginning of economic transformation it has been rising. There are numerous factors responsible for such a situation, which limit and hinder the improvement of the situation in the labour market. It is connected with low capital outlays on unemployment elimination as well as low level of education particularly in rural population. In the period of 2000-2005 in the Konecki Powiat the number of unemployed decreased from 11.882 to 11.401 persons. The situation on the labour market improved in all municipalities except Słupia Konecka.

In unemployment analysis social and demographic features of unemployed persons should be taken into consideration as they may indicate the possibilities of overcoming difficult life situation or becoming beneficiary of social security [Jażewicz 2007]. In the Konecki Powiat the most numerous are the age groups of 25-34 (28.2%) and 45-54 (23.9%). Percentage of unemployed at the working age (18-44) exceeded 70%. The most numerous group of the above-mentioned range was recorded in two municipalities: Radoszyce (76%) and Słupia Konecka (84%). The element preserving unfavourable structure of the unemployed is the existence of educational barriers of the rural areas inhabitants. Another important barrier is connected with problems with pulling oneself together in the new reality especially for the persons who lost their jobs in nearby factories due to industry restructuring. Apart from structures of the unemployed the analysis of unemployment time and entitlement to unemployment benefit should be taken into account. In 2005 in the Konecki Powiat unemployed for more than 12 months amounted to 57.4% of all unemployed (table 3).

The largest percentage of this group was recorded in the municipality of Radoszyce (63.5%), whereas in the Konecki Powiat only 16.3% unemployed were entitled to unemployment benefit. The lowest percentage of this category was recorded in the municipality of Słupia Konecka (11.8%). According to G. Węclawowicz [2001] unemployment is main reason for accumulation of social diversity and poverty. Moreover, unemployment as a negative phenomenon inhibiting economic development causes numerous social tensions as it limits opportunities and downgrades the standard of living of many inhabitants of rural areas. Nowadays this phenomenon is difficult to overcome and one of basic conditions to cope with it is to stimulate activity of rural population and support emergence of small business as well as multifunctional development which will be liable to "absorb" surplus labour.



**Table 3.** The unemployed registered in poviats employment agencies in the municipalities of the Konecki Poviat in 2005

Items	Total	Number of women	Entitled to unemployment benefit	At the working mobile age (18-44)	Unemployed for more than 12 months
Konecki Poviat	11401	5990	1856	8120	6549
Końskie	4521	2375	804	3193	2497
Stąporków	2674	1465	392	1781	1467
Fałków	635	347	100	475	395
Gowarczów	758	403	129	553	475
Radoszyce	1385	667	187	1053	880
Ruda Maleniecka	525	254	100	358	308
Słupia Konecka	313	147	37	265	166
Smyków	590	332	107	442	361

Source: Statistical yearbook of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship 2006.

Apart from natural environment there are many economic and social factors which affect development of rural areas. These two factors are connected with the structure of land use. Environmental conditions in the study area are not suitable for agricultural development. Poor and very poor soils are in majority and their percentage in the total area of arable lands exceeds 73%. As for the structure of arable lands, arable lands over 64% are croplands. One the characteristic features is increasing percentage of fallow and idle lands which discourages the users of small and very small-sized farms from agricultural activity [Wrońska 2007]. It should be noted that the Konecki Poviat has its own peculiarity as its development was influenced by economy-related elements and was connected with industrial activity in urban centres. The condition of rural areas depends to a considerable on the condition of a nearby town as it is connected with the surrounding area and actively creates the space.

In the 1990s many new businesses were established, especially in the private sector. In the period of 1995-2005 in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship the number of business entities doubled from 52,400 to 104,500. However, their largest density may be found in the suburban zone and in the vicinity of larger towns of the voivodeship. In the Konecki Poviat there is a considerable number of business entities connected with industry – foundries, mechanical working plants, heat treatment works and galvanizing plants. For a few years ceramic industry has been acting more active role in stimulating the area and creating new jobs. In the period of 2000-2005 the number of business entities increased from 5,644 to 6,308. The most numerous group was composed of business entities registered in the section of trade and repairs (41.6%). The greatest expansiveness in the above-mentioned section was connected with the fact that eco-

conomic activity did not require considerable capital outlays. In the municipalities of Radoszyce, Słupia Konecka, Smyków and Stąporków the second largest group was that of construction, whereas in others – industry (table 4).

**Table 4.** Business units of the national economy registered with REGON according to selected sections in 2000

Items	Total	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Trade and repairs	Hotels and restaurants	Transportation and stock management	Financial middleman services	Services for real estate and companies
Konecki Powiat	6308	149	942	750	2597	175	295	150	540
Końskie	3589	40	573	305	1514	112	152	88	366
Stąporków	1256	31	156	218	482	31	79	30	116
Fałków	144	6	21	20	55	3	12	6	3
Gowarczów	206	18	40	18	85	2	5	4	11
Radoszyce	530	22	69	83	234	12	30	12	26
Ruda Maleniecka	175	14	33	17	64	-	5	5	8
Słupia Konecka	163	9	18	21	70	4	8	3	5
Smyków	245	9	32	68	93	11	4	2	5

Source: Statistical yearbook of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship 2006.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows a huge disproportion in the social and economic development of rural area of the Konecki Powiat. Location of a particular area and its distance from larger centres in the functional and spatial hierarchy are closely connected. Municipalities located in the vicinity of the powiat town have much better opportunities for development than rural areas from the powiat outskirts. Declining importance of industry in the employment structure has led to increased unemployment. Moreover, in the area of this study there are also other negative phenomena regarding demographic characteristics (decreased employment and birth rate, ageing of population). If those processes continue, the range of depopulating areas of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship may increase.

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