Mortality rate and life expectancy in Bulgaria in the period 2011 – 2021. Dynamics and territorial differences

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**Abstract**. The demographic transition is an objective process taking place on a global scale. All regions and countries in the worldare taking part in it, while going through its separate phases for each of them takes a different span of time. Characteristic of the last phase of the transition is the phenomenon of demographic crisis. Bulgaria is among the countries in Europe where the negative effects of the demographic crisis are particularly strong. This applies to the greatest extent to the values of the mortality rate and of the average life expectancy. (Levkov, 2017)

***The purpose*** of the study is to examine the current trends in the development of two of the main demographic indicators in Bulgaria.

The ***object*** of research is the population of Bulgaria.

***Scope***. The study analyzes the indicators of mortality rate and average life expectancy. The intra-territorial differences are revealed. A comparison with EU countriesis made.

***Sources and methods***. Statistical data and analyses of Bulgarian and international official sources, as well as previous research of the author, are used. Quantitative methods and comparative analysis are mainly applied.

***Results and discussion***.

1. A continuing rise in mortality rates in Bulgaria was determined. It was most pronounced in the last two years of the period under review, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. During the same time, a decrease in the average life expectancy in the country was also found.

***Conclusions***:

1. The course of the demographic processes, in particular of the mortality rate and life expectancy, has its internal regularities which are determined by the demographic transition. It is also affected by phenomena which are difficult to predict such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. There are reasons to believe that the inconsistent decisions and actions of the Bulgarian governments in the management of the pandemic situation have directly contributed to the increase in the mortality rate in the country, and as a result have also contributed to the decrease in the life expectancy.

3. The deepening of the demographic crisis in Bulgaria requires a decisive change in the country’s demographic policy. The demographic problem and its solution or at least alleviation requires the adoption of comprehensive measures – social, economic, educational and political. It is necessary to activate the national discussion regarding these measures and to bring out the demographic problem as a priority in the management of the country in the coming decades.

**Key words**: *mortality rate, average life expectancy, territorial differences*.