

## ASSESSMENT OF RESOURCES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN DULOVO MUNICIPALITY

Milena Stoyanova <sup>1</sup>, Mihaela Georgieva-Petrova <sup>2</sup>

Professor, PhD, Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, [m.stoyanova@shu.bg](mailto:m.stoyanova@shu.bg)<sup>1</sup>

PhD, Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, [m.georgieva-petrova@shu.bg](mailto:m.georgieva-petrova@shu.bg)<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

The approach of developing a tourism strategy for the Municipality of Duloval involves reaching a consensus among the main stakeholders on its future development, which is a result of efforts of the whole community. It thus becomes a document of partnership, which is a prerequisite for its implementation. To this end, an assessment of the resources available, especially for tourism development is carried out during its development. Based on a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the main resources in the territory, a synthesised profile of the state of the municipality in terms of the main components of development is drawn up. In developing the profile, a comparative approach has been used to illustrate the municipality's place in the Silistra region, as well as a territorial approach, which enables the directions in achieving territorial balance to be outlined.

***Key words:*** Duloval Municipality, resources, assessment, tourism development

### Introduction

Human existence is directly related to the natural and geographical environment. It can be said that tourism was created and developed by people with the aim of using the geographical environment, natural resources to satisfy people's needs for communication with nature, cultural and architectural heritage, historical monuments, recovery, recreation, entertainment, etc. Since tourism is an industry in the service sector, human resources are of great importance for the functioning of the tourist recreation system.

The purpose of the report is to examine tourist resources, as well as to assess their condition for the development of tourism in the Duloval Municipality. Tourist resources are source objects and phenomena that cause tourists to head to a given destination and contribute to the psychophysical recovery and expansion of tourists' knowledge - directly or indirectly. The report analyzes trends related to employment and unemployment in the Municipality of Duloval in order to gain an idea of whether the measures implemented to promote employment and reduce unemployment in a European municipality are effective.

### Assessment of the geographical location of Duloval municipality

The Municipality of Duloval is located in the eastern part of the Danube Plain and covers part of the northernmost part of the Ludogorie area. It is located within the borders of the North Central Planning Region of Bulgaria and is included in the administrative borders of the Silistra District.



**Fig. 1. Map of Silistra district**  
(Source: IDP of the municipality of Dulovo 2021-2027)

The area of Dulovo municipality is 566.3 km<sup>2</sup>, ranking second in size in Silistra district. There are 27 settlements in Dulovo municipality – 1 town – Dulovo, which is the center of the municipality, and 26 villages. The town is located 37 km from the regional town of Silistra, 60 km from the town of Shumen and about 92 km from the town of Varna and the town of Ruse. The distribution of the road network in the spatial structure of Dulovo municipality can be characterized as evenly developed with well-established regional connections. In the territorial structure of the municipality and near the town of Dulovo, the main republican road I-7 passes, which provides the connection with the municipal center Alfatar and the regional town of Silistra, as well as with the Hemus Motorway. The length of the passing road is 25 km, and it is in good technical condition. (IDP of the municipality of Dulovo 2021-2027). The remoteness of the municipality from the centers of economic life in Bulgaria and its small population pose significant challenges to the economic and tourism development of the municipality.

### **Assessment of the tourist resources of Dulovo municipality**

#### ***Natural tourist resources***

*Relief.* The territory of the municipality is characterized by a mostly flat relief, intersected by valleys of different widths, which are oriented north-south. The relief forms have a small absolute height and a small difference between the heights of individual objects - plains, lowlands and fields. The altitude is between 150-250 m.

*Climate.* The territory of the municipality belongs to the temperate continental climate zone. It is characterized by cold winters and warm summers, a large annual temperature amplitude, a well-pronounced spring-summer precipitation maximum and winter precipitation minimum, with a relatively stable snow cover forming annually. The region is widely open to the north and the climate is formed under the influence of continental air masses from temperate latitudes, invading from the northeast. The open terrain configuration allows winds to come from all directions, but the most frequent are southeast and south winds. The prevailing winds in the Dulovo municipality are northeast. The average wind speed is 4.1 km/h. Strong cold northeast winds blow during the winter months, causing snow drifts. The average temperature throughout the year in Dulovo ranges from about 4°C in January to about 29°C in July and August. The area receives moderate amounts of precipitation throughout the year, averaging about 50 mm per month. Precipitation is relatively evenly distributed throughout the year, with slightly higher amounts during the autumn and winter months (October to March) compared to the spring and summer months (April to September).

*Waters.* There is no surface water on the territory of the Dulovo municipality. In the settlements there are built reservoirs, in which mainly rainwater is collected and through it water is supplied to

agriculture and watering of animals is carried out. Some of them are stocked with fish and attract tourists for fishing.

*Flora.* The territories of the Dulovo municipality covered by forest massifs have an area of 144,634 da, which is about 25% of the territory of the municipality. The vegetation belts are represented mainly by tser, blagun, oak, border, etc., in places there is also the presence of common gorun, common hornbeam, etc. Additionally, coniferous plantations have been introduced, which are used in shaping the inter-settlement space. The main type of vegetation for this territory is broad-leaved deciduous. The main representatives are the tree communities with a predominance of deciduous summer-green species such as summer oak, common hornbeam, common beech, cera, blagun, etc. The shrub and herbaceous communities are mainly of a productive nature: common hazel, sumac, lilac, meadow fescue, meadow classica. This type of vegetation forms the main part of the plant cover of the country.

*Fauna.* Dulovo municipality falls into the Danube region, which is part of the Palearctic zoogeographic region. The specific physiographic conditions have led to the formation of a rich and diverse fauna. Typical representatives for this geographical region are found such as: red deer, roe deer, wild boar, pheasant, grouse, hedgehog, hare, fox, lizard, skunk and wild boar. Of the game mammals, the wild boar and in some places the red deer are found.

*Protected areas.* The following Natura 2000 areas fall within the territory of the municipality of Dulovo, according to the list of protected areas for the conservation of natural habitats and wild flora and fauna (Directive 92/43/EEC):

- The Ludogorie Protected Area - The relief is flat-hilly with characteristic forms - canyon-like dry valleys, loess-like saucers, square fields. Half of the total area of the site is occupied by deciduous forests, and the other half is arable land and pastures. The forests are mainly mixed with silver-leaved linden with common hornbeam or cer, in places with hornbeam and field maple. The total number of identified species is 87. Of these, 23 species are subject to protection in the protected area. 115 species of nesting birds have been identified in the protected area, of which 31 are included in the "Red Book of the Republic of Bulgaria". Of the species encountered, 51 are of European nature conservation importance.

- The Harsovska River Protected Area is a Natura 2000 protected area under the Wild Birds Directive. It covers a rocky dry valley of the Harsovska Reka. It covers an area of 35,428.6 ha. So far, 109 bird species have been identified in the protected area, of which 28 are listed in the "Red Book of the Republic of Bulgaria". Of the species encountered, 47 are of European conservation importance. The dry valley of the Harsovska River is part of the Western Black Sea flyway Via Pontica.

Geographical and economic-geographical factors have favored the preservation of a clean environment in the Dulovo municipality and opportunities for the development of tourism related to the natural environment.

### ***Anthropogenic tourist resources***

The geographical characteristics and spatial development of the settlement structure in the municipality of Dulovo, located in the eastern part of the Danube Plain and the northernmost part of the Ludogorie, are a prerequisite for the settlement of various civilizations on its territory since Antiquity. Cultural heritage is the result of the layering of past civilizations and eras, which carry a specific memory and identity of the place. Cultural directions express the stability over time of settlement interconnections and permanently distinct urban axes. The National Concept for Spatial Development of the Republic of Bulgaria presents the cultural corridors and assesses the degree of significance of cultural layering, with the municipality of Dulovo being presented with a low degree - the presence of one weakly expressed cultural layer.

Cultural heritage encompasses intangible and tangible immovable and movable heritage as a set of cultural values that carry historical memory and national identity. Cultural values are available on the territory of the municipality - tangible and intangible evidence of human presence and activity, which are of high scientific and cultural value for the individual, the community and society in the region. The cultural heritage in the municipality of Dulovo is represented by archaeological and historical, as well as natural values, folk traditions and cultural customs. The immovable cultural values in the territorial structure of the municipality are located mainly in the settlements of Dulovo,

Vodno, Skala and Ruyno, and in the spatial structure of the municipality of Duloovo the following more significant immovable cultural values have been identified. (IDP of the municipality of Duloovo 2021-2027).

The following immovable cultural values (ICC) on the territory of Duloovo municipality have been declared of "national significance" categories: in the town of Duloovo - Ancient and medieval settlement with a necropolis - 200 m northwest; town of Duloovo, Selishtna mogila; village of Vodno - Ancient settlement, "Paraekelik" locality; village of Skala - Late antique fortress and medieval settlement; Alian temple türbe in the village of Chernik; Marble column with an Arabic inscription from 1253 in the village of Grancharovo.

Other significant sites on the territory of Duloovo Municipality are:

- The early medieval fortress "Kartal Kale" (Eagle Fortress), built in the 18th century near the village of Ruyno, Duloovo municipality. This is the second fortress after the village of Ruyno and is located only about 4 km from "Ayazmoto". It is located in a bizarrely inaccessible place in a dry valley on the ruins of a small Thracian settlement and a late antique fortification. The Demir Baba Teke spring near the village of Ruyno in the Duloovska municipality is unique in its fame as a cult center of 3 different religions for 3,000 years. It is revered equally by Alians, Sunnis and Christians. The area is also associated with the residence of the Muslim saint Demir Baba, literally translated as the Iron Father, in the mid-16th century, described in his biography "Vilyatnaame" and associated with the Kazalbashi as an ethnic group. At the foot of the area is a healing spring, the spring, which gave the name to the area. The main attraction is the spring – a small cave with a crack in the bottom, from which water flows, which appeared after Demir Baba stuck his sword into the rock.

- A settlement mound in the "Zhazhda" park. The area of the mound was settled in ancient times, and people did not leave it during Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Ottoman Empire. The valuable remains of ceramic vessels, coins, weapons, tools, foundations of dwellings and many others found there arouse interest among visitors. In the past, a river flowed there and there were numerous springs. Now it is a park "Thirst" and is a water supply zone.

- Medieval fortress near the village of Okorsh. The early medieval Bulgarian fortress (from the First Bulgarian State) is located on the eastern terrace of the dried-up Srebreska River. Several years of archaeological research have proven a rich material culture of the local population in the 10th-11th centuries. Unique archaeological finds have been found.

The rock monastery of Haydushki Kashti is located on the left bank of the Kanagyol, south on the Duloovo-Tervel road. The monastery complex consists of cells, a refectory, a crypt, a church, and utility rooms. The church is the most extensive room and is located in the southern part, and next to it there is another large room, which was probably used as a refectory. On the upper level above it, four cells are cut out, and below them is the room for commercial purposes.

In the town of Duloovo there is also the Historical Museum, which consists of 4 departments: Archeology, Ethnography, New and Recent History and the Art Gallery. In the village of Okorsh there is an Ethnographic Museum of the Native Land. The museum has archaeological and ethnographic collections tracing the history of the local population. In a special workshop for textile production, visitors to the museum can participate in the activities of preparing and weaving textile products.

In the village of Okorsh there is an Ethnographic Museum of the Native Land. The museum is located in an old school building and has archaeological and ethnographic collections tracing the history of the local population. In a special workshop for textile production, museum visitors can participate in the activities of preparing and weaving textile products.

Art Gallery - It has 70 paintings - paintings, graphics, sculptures, small sculptures, etc. Two works by the world-famous sculptor Vezhdi Rashidov are exhibited.

The municipal cultural and educational policy is implemented through the active participation of the 28 community centers and their libraries with a total of over 250,000 book collections. The National Community Center "N. Y. Vaptsarov-1895" in the town of Duloovo is an established cultural center in the municipality with functioning forms of amateur art, a rich library collection and is the center of community center activities in the municipality. The community centers in the Duloovo Municipality fulfill their unique mission to preserve and develop local traditions and cultural values, through the many performances of the over 60 amateur groups working for them (vocal, dance, musical, etc.). The community centers in the Municipality are not only important centers for the

preservation and upgrading of the original and traditional cultural values for our people, but also centers that use new technologies in the creation of activities and events that meet the needs of people of different ages.

The intangible cultural heritage in the municipality is represented by folk traditions and cultural customs. The cultural calendar of the municipality is represented by an active cultural life.

The main cultural events on the territory of the Duloovo Municipality are the annual holidays of the settlements and the folklore holidays, in which the population shows interest and initiative. Significant for the cultural life are:

- The national holidays of the Republic of Bulgaria and the holidays of the settlements;
- In February, the municipality celebrates the anniversary of the birth of Stefan Kaley - a local poet, a municipal review of amateur art is held in the National Theatre "N. Y. Vaptsarov-1895";
- Traditional May cultural celebrations "Days of my town";
- Duloovo Carnival - "The Golden Donkey - 2014";
- A Regional Folk Singing Competition "Duloovo Nightingales - 2014" is held;
- Regional Festival of the Third Age "Verbino 2014" and others.

The cultural infrastructure and the diverse cultural events are a prerequisite for the development of cultural tourism in the municipality. Ways should be sought to promote existing cultural sites, enrich and modernize the infrastructure. The condition of the facilities in community centers should also be improved.

### ***Demographic situation and human resources***

In the report, in addition to examining the tourism potential, one of the main tasks is to make an objective analysis of the levels of employment and unemployment in the municipality of Duloovo and to outline the demographic situation, as well as the demographic challenges facing the municipality. Unlike most other municipalities in Bulgaria, large companies in the Municipality of Duloovo have a very modest contribution to the dynamics and value of employment, as well as to other key indicators for the local economy.

Data from current demographic statistics show that in the municipality of Duloovo by 2024 the population is 23,781 people. The population in the Municipality of Duloovo for the period 2000-2024 has decreased from 32,880 to 23,781 people, which is 9,099 people for the period of 24 years. Therefore, the trend in the Municipality of Duloovo is towards a decrease in the population and partial depopulation of some settlements. These negative changes are one of the main unfavorable factors for the future demographic and socio-economic development of the municipality. This leads to changes related to the reduction of the workforce, the reproductive potential in the municipality, depopulation of small settlements and migration flows of young people of active, reproductive age outside the borders of Duloovo. The largest concentration of the population in the Duloovo municipality is in the municipal center, the town of Duloovo, which has a population of 5677 people (2024), as well as the 6 villages with a population of over 1000 people - the village of Okorsh, the village of Poroyno, the village of Pravda, the village of Chernik, the village of Chernolik and the village of Yarebitsa. The village of Verbino ranks last in terms of population with 27 inhabitants. Therefore, this persistent trend of decrease is characteristic of both the urban and rural population.

The age structure of the population in the Duloovo Municipality shows an accumulation of the population in the age ranges over 50 years. What is not positive for the municipality is that the largest share of the population is in the age intervals after 45-49 years. The smallest are the cohorts at the base of the age pyramid (0-4 years and 5-9 years), which is determined by the low birth rate, the increasing life expectancy, as well as the emigration activity of young people. The working-age contingent in the municipality shows a low share of persons in the sub-working age, a higher share of persons in the over-working age, a progressive decrease in the working-age population, which is due to the low birth rate and leads to an accumulation of the population in the old ages, and this poses a threat to the future formation of the working-age contingent. This trend is characteristic not only for the Duloovo Municipality, but also for the region and the entire country. However, what distinguishes the Municipality of Duloovo, and it is very positive, is the accumulation of people in the two age groups 40-44 and 45-49, who are among the most active on the labor market and increase the contingent of the working-age population. What is worrying, however, is the low birth rate in the municipality.

In percentage terms, the share of the population in sub-working age, working age and above working age in 2024 is as follows: 16%:58%:26%, and for the country the ratio is 15%:60%:25%. The share of the population in above-working age significantly exceeds the population in sub-working age, while at the same time the working age population in the municipality has values close to the average for the country.

In recent years, both in the country and in the North Central Region, Silistra District and Dulovo Municipality, some negative demographic trends and processes have been observed, related to decreasing birth rate, increasing mortality, increased migration processes to larger cities in the country or abroad and, as a result, depopulation of small settlements. Within Silistra District, the most favorable in terms of reproduction and age structure of the population are the municipalities of Kaynardzha and Dulovo. Dulovo Municipality occupies one of the leading places in the economic development of the district. The highest number and share of employed persons is in Silistra Municipality (53% of the employed in the district), followed by Dulovo (20%). In 2012, Dulovo Municipality ranked fourth in Silistra District in terms of unemployment rate (25%), after the municipalities of Kaynardzha (43%), Glavinitsa (27.4%) and Alfatar (29.9%). This determines the measures to reduce the economically inactive population and the unemployed on the territory of Dulovo Municipality as one of the most priority areas in the development of the municipality.

The problem related to human resources, affecting employment and unemployment, is one of the most relevant in the modern world. There is hardly a more universal problem than the one related to human labor. Let us first clarify the concepts of employment and unemployment. Employment is called the generation of value from the activity produced by a person, i.e. the employee contributes his work and knowledge to the benefit of the employer in exchange for financial compensation, known as a salary. Unemployment, in turn, is a concept that describes all persons who are currently not employed, but are looking for work or expect to return to their jobs. Job search includes the following activities: registration at the labor exchange, job checks in companies, job search through online sites, etc.

While the unemployment rate is an indicator of the reserves of the economy and an indicator of social tension, the employment rate has a more pronounced economic emphasis. All surveys of the unemployed clearly show that the real problem is not the lack of work, but the inability to access guaranteed income. The vast majority of registered unemployed people in Bulgaria are not looking for an opportunity to work. Some of the European funds directed at temporary employment programs do not yield results, because among the registered unemployed there are no people willing to work if the salary is not above the average for the country. Permanent employment is oriented primarily by young people who have taken responsibility for their own lives. For the rest, it can be noted that they rely on unemployment benefits without actively looking for work. The significant share of long-term unemployed people in our country shows exactly this - those who remain unemployed for more than a year are not actually actively looking for an opportunity for employment. Some of them rely on income generated in the informal economy. The lack of qualifications and work experience determine the poor chances of finding a job for the majority of long-term unemployed (those who have been unemployed for more than a year). The problem is not that there is no job that is suitable for their qualification or specialty, but quite the opposite - the offered job positions are not attractive enough for the unemployed.

To determine the level of unemployment in a given country, data on the state of the labor market are used, namely the demographic growth of the population, structural changes in production, migration processes and others, and in its predominant part we could say about unemployment that it is the result of the disturbed equilibrium of the relevant market, in which the supply of labor exceeds the corresponding quantity demanded. The explanations for the causes of unemployment are different. For the most part, it is the result of the disturbed equilibrium of the labor market, in which the supply of labor exceeds its demand. Many economic, political and institutional factors also have an influence. When people remain unemployed for more than a year, the risk of them failing to return to the labor market and falling into the poverty trap increases significantly.

The main reason for the increase in the average annual number of registered unemployed is the restructuring of enterprises, staff reductions and the low activity of the programs and measures on the labor market. The vulnerability of the local economy is manifested in the closure of several enterprises, which contribute to the increase in unemployment in the municipality. It should also be

noted the large number of illiterate or low-literate residents. The specific behavior of certain groups of unemployed people on the labor market can be explained by the different causes of unemployment and the different characteristics of the unemployed. While a large part of them are active in the search for work and represent enthusiastic potential entrepreneurs, there is also a group of discouraged unemployed people who are practically excluded from the labor market. Supporting continuous training and the development of skills adapted to the needs of the market, especially in rural areas, is of great importance in alleviating the problem of unemployment. This requires increasing the flexibility and improving the capacity of the vocational education and training system in order to adequately respond to the changing demand on the labor market.

The levels of employment and unemployment largely depend on the level of completed education or lack thereof. Also of essential importance is the possession of professional qualifications. Changes are needed in the education system in the country in order to take into account the needs of the labor market. The most problematic groups in the age structure of the unemployed are young people and the elderly unemployed. Higher qualifications and education are a prerequisite for better adaptability to the requirements of the modern labor market. On the other hand, unemployment among the less educated is influenced both by the demand for low-skilled labor by companies and by the active labor market policy that our country is pursuing.

A low share of the population in the Duloovo Municipality has completed higher education, while the share of the population with primary and elementary education is high (over 50%). The trend that stands out is a higher birth rate and lower mortality rate compared to Silistra district and the country. There is also an unstable trend of mechanical population movement. Salaries and pensions in the Duloovo Municipality, as well as in the entire country, continue to increase, but are still relatively low. The poverty level in the municipality is shrinking, but remains high. The development of the local labor market is unsatisfactory. Domestic investments are growing significantly, but foreign investments are lagging behind. Due to all these negative trends, measures are necessary that the Duloovo Municipality must take and implement in order to promote employment and limit unemployment and, accordingly, ensure a good standard of living for its residents.

### **Infrastructure and types of tourism offered in the municipality of Duloovo**

The state of the transport infrastructure is of great importance for the development of tourism in the municipality. The Municipality of Duloovo has a relatively well-developed road network, mainly consisting of inter-village roads, which are in poor condition. The road surface has a heavily worn surface layer and areas with a concentration of holes and cracks. A large part of the roads need major repairs. For rehabilitation, mainly rehabilitation measures are taken, consisting of patching the road surface. These measures are extremely insufficient to improve the condition of the road network on the territory of the municipality.

The total length of the roads is 236 km, of which 78.980 km are class IV roads and 126.601 km are class I, II and III roads. The first-class road Silistra - Duloovo is directed towards Shumen. The railway line Silistra - Sofia passes through the administrative center. Regarding transport accessibility, it was found that the average time for access to the town of Duloovo from the settlements in the municipality is 22 minutes or 17.7 km. Good transport accessibility is determined primarily by the favorable relief and terrain conditions, which are a prerequisite for the good development of transport axes and the location of most settlements near them.

The transport service of the population in the municipality is carried out by private carriers, with an inconsistent level of service quality. Rehabilitation, construction and optimization of transport networks and systems are necessary in order to improve the quality of services and increase passenger flow. (DP of the Municipality of Duloovo for the period 2007-2013).

The green system in the Municipality of Duloovo includes all parks, gardens that are public municipal property and are for wide use, and it is supplemented by green areas with special purposes and those for limited public use. Green areas are mainly lawns with trees and shrubs. Green areas that are subject to maintenance are gardens and parks, adjacent street green areas and gardens, which require a complex of measures and actions for their maintenance, which contributes to the improvement of the microclimate in the municipality and the recreation of the population. For the needs of weekly public recreation, forest areas, water and fishing bases, tourist and hunting lodges and equestrian bases are included, providing excellent opportunities for the development of alternative tourism. It

is also necessary to build, restore and maintain a green system for recreation and leisure in the Dulovo Municipality, investments in maintaining the park and street landscaping.

A prerequisite for the development of the tourism sector is the cultural and historical heritage of the Dulovo Municipality. The territory of the municipality is located near several main cultural areas/spaces with a concentration of cultural values - the Danube Cultural Space, the Black Sea Cultural Space, the Northern Cultural Space, which are represented by cultural values from one or two historical periods with identical stylistic and semantic features, combined with natural and ethnographic features. (IDP of the Dulovo Municipality 2021-2027). The policy of the municipality is oriented towards managing and connecting the ecological, landscape and cultural values of the regions and realizing the local development potential. In this sense, the spatial and socio-economic development of the territory will be oriented towards the cultural heritage in the municipality and the natural and cultural landscapes that express regional specificity.

Favorable for the development of tourism in the Municipality of Dulovo is the fact that it is not a region with a difficult ecological situation. There are no major industrial pollutants on the territory of the municipality. The problems come mainly from the low level of amenities and pollution from point sources. Pollution from road transport is mainly due to the outdated car park.

Hunting tourism in the Karakuz State Hunting Reserve is very promising for the Dulovo municipality. The Karakuz State Hunting Reserve is named after the Karakuz locality, which encompasses one of the largest forest areas on the territory of the Karakuz State Hunting Reserve. The headquarters of the administration is located in the town of Dulovo, Silistra region. The total area of the state forest territories managed by the Karakuz State Hunting Reserve in the town of Dulovo is 19,873.4 ha. Karakuz State Hunting Reserve offers hunters and their companions accommodation in hunting lodges and small family hotels in close proximity to the hunting grounds. The Kokiche Hunting Lodge is located 10 km from the town of Dulovo in a beautiful oak forest. The three-story building has 2 apartments and 4 double rooms with separate bathrooms and satellite TV. 10 guests can be accommodated here.

Red deer, roe deer and wild boar are hunted on the territory of the Karakuz Game Reserve. Small game includes European hare, hunting pheasant /Korean and Mongolian/, field partridge and wild duck. Migratory birds include quail, turtledove, snipe and the great white-fronted goose. Predators include wolves, jackals and foxes. There are a large number of wild cats that are prohibited from hunting. Karakuz Game Reserve organizes hunting and alternative tourism during all days and seasons of the year. Small game hunting is very popular and offers great emotions to all practitioners. The farm is unique in that it successfully combines hunting of large and small game and fishing on the Danube River. It has a boat with which hunting and fishing on the Danube River are practiced, and out of season it is used for water walks.

At present, the municipality of Dulovo has not yet taken measures to develop tourism as an independent sector. Actions are needed related to expanding the spatial scope of cultural heritage, as well as creating a small-scale infrastructure to support the offered tourist services. The tourism development of the Municipality of Dulovo must be oriented towards the development of cultural heritage and natural and cultural landscapes in its territory. (IDP of the Municipality of Dulovo 2021-2027).

The Municipality lacks conditions for tourists to visit most natural and cultural sites: there are no parking lots, toilets, and in some places, even electricity and water. Actions in this area should be aimed at integrating its transport system with those of the country and the European Union in order to achieve European standards for the better movement of people and goods, with a view to stimulating the tourism development of the municipality and protecting the environment. In order to realize these intentions, it is necessary to work on building the infrastructure environment for the creation and development of business through repair, reconstruction and construction of road transport infrastructure, connecting tourist sites, accommodation, catering and entertainment establishments with the main roads and with the emissive tourist markets.

### **Priorities and guidelines for tourism development in the territory of Dulovo Municipality**

Based on the vision and research on the challenges facing the Dulovo Municipality, the main strategic goal has been defined: "Ensuring sustainable and balanced development of the municipality and



creating favorable conditions for life and recreation in its settlements". It is necessary to determine the priorities and goals of the individual sectors of socio-economic development, as well as to identify the relevant measures and instruments, including financial resources for their achievement.

The priorities for the development of the Dulovo Municipality stem from the vision for development and the set strategic goal. They determine the direction of development and the framework of investment efforts by the municipality. Under the conditions of budget restrictions, it is especially important to find an optimal form for combining the needs of the municipality with the available financial resources - internal and external - in order to achieve the set strategic goal. Priority for the development of the municipality are activities that support business development and stimulate the attraction of new investments and increase employment; The educational structure should be adapted to the modern requirements of the labor market and the specific local economic conditions; To improve the quality of life in settlements, the necessary investments should be made in local and inter-settlement infrastructure, as well as to promote the preservation of local traditions as a living bridge between generations; To optimize the social infrastructure; To support the exposure of the municipality with the opportunities for the development of cultural, ethno, agrarian and hunting tourism.

The main impact of its implementation is aimed at taking specific measures for the development of the local economy, improving public welfare and the quality of life, 25 achieving harmonious use of natural and human resources, ensuring a healthy ecological environment with preserved biological diversity for future generations, preserving the achievements and traditions in culture, education and art as an enduring symbol for the municipality.

- Measure 1: Utilization of the potential for the development of year-round alternative tourism. Dulovo Municipality has relatively few prerequisites for the development of tourism. The potential for tourism should be carefully studied in order to propose such forms that will complement those types of tourism that are developed in neighboring municipalities and under different natural conditions. When determining the types of tourism, it is possible to develop alternative types of tourism in combination with such in neighboring municipalities. Tourism projects should be part of the measures to support the development of tourism under the operational programs, including the regional operational program, financed by European programs. Improving the local infrastructure related to the development of tourism, including roads, communication links, electricity supply, water supply and ecology. Improving the services offered by modernizing the accommodation base and the infrastructure for the development of tourist activities related to culture and natural landmarks in the municipality, attracting private investment and working in a business network. Preparation of new, in terms of activities and destinations, tourist packages in order to overcome the seasonality and geographical concentration of resorts within the municipality and neighboring municipalities. Improvement of marketing strategies and especially of services for determining specific market segments in order to increase the number of tourists in the municipality. Achieving territorial balance in the development of the municipality.

- Measure 2: Training of human resources in the field of tourism. The development of tourism in the municipality is an entirely new sector of the economy. In this regard, it is necessary to train human resources in this sector of the economy. On the other hand, the presence of significant human potential allows for the preparation of tourism specialists to work in the field of tourism.

- Measure 3: Preservation and adaptation of the network of cultural institutions and activities to the new social realities. The knowledge economy is not based only on education and through the maintenance and development of cultural institutions in the municipality. In this regard, it is appropriate to develop the following activities: maintaining and developing the museum in combination with the art gallery, holding traditional cultural holidays in the municipality, developing amateur art, studying and supporting ethnic cultural features, etc.

- Measure 4: Establishing a museum-art gallery as a modern center for cultural communication, education and entertainment. The activity is to increase the collections, create appropriate repositories for museum values and turn them into one of the opportunities for tourists to visit.

- Measure 5: Promoting children's and youth folklore ensembles in schools and at cultural institutions in the city. The presence of a significant number of young people requires the

development of amateur art and its maintenance by the municipality and EU funds. (IDP of the Duloovo Municipality 2021-2027).

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be noted that at the moment tourism in the Duloovo Municipality is not well developed enough, but the region has the necessary natural resources and potential for its positive development in the future. Also, after the indicated data and the analysis made, we could say that the Duloovo Municipality strives to improve the quality of life of its residents by implementing certain measures and projects related to promoting employment and limiting unemployment, as well as striving for social assistance to at-risk groups of the population. It is also important to mention that one of the main goals of the municipality is to retain the young generation on the territory of the municipality, striving to provide maximum jobs for its able-bodied population, although at the moment the level of development of the local labor market is not satisfactory. The share of the working-age population is relatively high - 58% (2024), which indicates a positive trend in this direction. A low share of the population in the Duloovo municipality has completed higher education, while the share of the population with primary and primary education is high (over 50%). A priority for the Duloovo Municipality should be to attract and be able to retain qualified young specialists in certain areas of the labor market. The trend of higher birth rate and lower mortality rate compared to Silistra district and the country is also a positive indicator for the development and future of the Duloovo Municipality.

The Duloovo Municipality is an attractive place for work, recreation and tourism, with preserved cultural and historical heritage and traditions, having the potential for sustainable socio-economic development. However, at the moment, the Duloovo Municipality has not taken measures to develop tourism as an independent sector, but this would be a good opportunity for the development of the region itself as a whole. Targeted actions are needed related to expanding the spatial scope of cultural heritage. Also, a small-scale infrastructure should be created to support the offered tourist services. The tourism development of the Duloovo Municipality should be oriented towards the development of the cultural heritage and the natural and cultural landscapes in its territory.

In order to be marketable and competitive, the municipality's tourism products must be created in compliance with two basic principles: maximum diversity and maximum scope. The first principle implies the composition and offering of tourism products with many profiles. The second principle implies the linking of municipal tourism products with regional and national chains of route-cognitive tourism products.

### Acknowledgements

The report is under project No RD-08-105/05.02.2025 REGIONAL RESEARCH OF THE TERRITORY OF NORTHEASTERN BULGARIA – PHASE 2

### References

1. Cox, P. R. (1976). Demography. Cambridge University Press.
2. Development Plan of Duloovo Municipality for the period 2007-2013 (DP)
3. Integrated Development Plan of Duloovo Municipality 2021-2027 (IDP)
4. Nikolova, M., Nedkov, S., Naydenov, K., Stankova, S., Simeonov, D., Stoyanov, K. (2020). BGS and the Contemporary Progress of the Geographical Science towards Smart Geography. *Smart Geography: 100 Years of the Bulgarian Geographical Society*, 13-28.
5. Guidelines for the development of a national. (2010). Methodological. Concept for spatial development of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period up to 2020. *NCTR, MRDPB*, S.
6. Petrov, K. (2021). Geoeconomic Aspect and Processes before the Global Spatial Development of the Modern World. *Global Prosperity*, 1(3), 19-27.
7. Tsonkov, N., Petrov, K. (2023). Specifics and problems in the spatial development of Stara Zagora Municipality. *Journal of Management Sciences and Applications*, 2(1), 88-102.
8. Shterionov, S. (2015). The Research of the Bulgarian Historical Demography: State and Perspectives. *Population*, (3), 103-161.
9. Petrov, K. (2019). Nature and Sharpness of Regional Development and Modeling of Territorial Management of Bulgaria. *Scientific Papers of the University of National and World Economy*, (2), 335-366.

10. Williams, K. Y., O'Reilly III, C. A. (1998). Demography and. Research in organizational behavior, 20, 77-140.
11. Scheidel, W. (2009). Population and demography. *A Companion to Ancient History*, 134-145.
12. Shryock, H. S., Siegel, J. S. (1980). The methods and materials of demography (Vol. 2). *Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census*.
14. Vladev, I., Vladeva, R. (2020). The Demographic Problem-one of the Main Problems of Contemporary. *Acta Scientifica Naturalis*, 7(2).