

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE PASSAGES IN BULGARIA FOR THE EUROPEAN CONNECTION IN THE NORTH-SOUTH DIRECTION

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Summary

This presentation assesses the spatial potential of the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria in terms of connectivity between regions and territories. Object of study besides the national space, its connection with other countries, the processes of integration and connectivity through the passes in Bulgaria. In practice, due to the complex relief of our national space, the connection is realized through passages. Their significance, structure and need for construction and development are presented in this presentation. Bulgarian ports have a certain strategic importance, which creates conditions for them to be infrastructural provided and adapted to the national transport scheme. The good functioning and construction of the Bulgarian passes is a necessary condition for the development of the regional economic potential of the Bulgarian state.

Key words: regional development, model, management, territory, connectivity, infrastructure, economy, space, structure

Introduction

The first 20 years of the 21st century have outlined new economic challenges to social development. This development is characterized by the observance of the principles of free movement of people, goods and capital, as well as the right of establishment. Conditions have been created for building a model of connectivity in the North-South direction, projects such as the "Three Seas" have become possible, construction of new highways and roads that encourage exchanges between Central and Eastern European countries with those from Western Europe and the Middle East. In this situation, Bulgaria is called to play a significant role as a crossroads, where the main roads pass in the direction North-South and West-East.. Of course, this role means that the Bulgarian state will build a reliable transport infrastructure with the appropriate geo-economics potential to meet this challenge. In this respect, the last 10 years have seen a serious retreat of Bulgaria. It is related to the fact that important strategic sites related to infrastructure have been delayed or their implementation is at a dead end. Moreover, 5 out of 10 European infrastructure corridors pass through Bulgaria. To a large extent, the slowdown in our infrastructural connectivity has created conditions for countries such as Serbia, Greece, Northern Macedonia and Romania to seek an alternative to overcome the country's territory as part of the European network (1). The construction of highways such as Neya Ignatia in northern Greece, the large-scale infrastructure projects in Serbia that aim to create a high level of connectivity between Thessaloniki and Budapest speak volumes. However, the construction of our infrastructure has no alternative to the shortest North-South roads. It is important to create an infrastructure that will help demographic flows to cover larger spaces in less time. In this regard, within our country there is a need not only to build infrastructure connectivity, but also to improve the regional economy. This requires connectivity to create areas of high gravity around urban areas with strong regional economies. This suggests that the daily labor migrations of the population increase to a minimum of 15-20 kilometers, in many cases in the range of 100-130. This requires daily movement of the population. Population movement is any relocation or migration of a statistically significant number of people inhabiting a country, district or region (1).

In the Bulgarian conditions the sustainable spatial development of the territory is connected with overcoming the difficulties of the relief and the inefficient use of most of the key passes. In geo-economics order, the pass is an important connection between two territories separated by a certain geographical object. This determines the geo-economics focus for improving connectivity to bring Bulgarian passes to the fore. From a historical point of view, the passes of Bulgaria provide connectivity on the territory (2). On the other hand,

they are important for achieving a high level of connectivity not only in a national but also in an international context. The focus on their importance and geo-economics role allows us to pay attention to the need for their development by building the necessary infrastructure to achieve high levels of connectivity.

Nature, significance and infrastructural connectivity of the passes in Bulgaria

In the territory of Bulgaria most of the passes have been important since antiquity. The passages are important connecting links and road arteries between Southern and Northern Bulgaria, between separate territories and communities. From a geographical point of view, the passage is, in general, a place to pass through; in particular, the road that passes through mountainous terrain is most often meant. The mountain passes are due to significant depressions in the ridges of the mountain ridges at the places where the source areas of two rivers, which flow in opposite directions, approach (3). As most mountain ranges in the world have been difficult to overcome travel barriers, the passes have always been key in history, especially in terms of human migration, trade and wartime. In the past, the passages provided a livelihood for the so-called *derventjii* (or *dervendzhii*, from *dervent*, in Turkish: *dervent* - passage, gorge, gorge) - people from the enslaved population in the Ottoman Empire, who guarded them and led troops and caravans through the dangerous places. The woodcutters had the right to bear arms and were exempt from certain taxes.

Apart from the passage from a geographical point of view, the gorge and the saddle are also important for the geoeconomic development of our territory. A gorge is a river valley that crosses a mountain range and is much narrower than a deep one. For example, the river Struma, which for the most part flows through a valley, but in places passes into a gorge - the Kresna gorge. Gorges, gorges, gorges and canyons are used as synonyms for gorge. On the other hand, a saddle is called a short descent of a mountain ridge, bounded between two adjacent peaks (4). The main geomorphological factors that influence the formation of saddles are glacial erosion in the high parts of the mountains and regressive erosion of rivers. The appearance of the saddle is determined by the petrographic composition of the ridge, the degree and nature of erosive processes, as well as past tectonic movements in the area. Roads and paths connecting the two opposite slopes of the ridge often pass through the saddles. In this case, the saddle is the highest point of the trail or route. In mountainous areas, saddles are used to move between two peaks, because along them passes the shortest and most comfortable path between the peaks. Saddles are often named with different names according to the specifics of the terrain - pass (saddle with rounded ridge), bow (shallow saddle), gate (saddle with a greater decrease in its lowest part, U-shaped saddle), *preslap* (saddle at a ridge with a rounded cross section - often denudation surfaces in the ridge parts), edge (saddle in a mountainous area with glacial activity, at the contact line of two adjacent cirques). After all that has been said so far, under the influence of the relief within the national territory by the state and the public-private partnership, a series of events and actions are carried out to overcome the deficits in terms of infrastructure accessibility between the individual urban areas in order to achieve effective economic cooperation (7). Moreover, the geopolitical vision for the development of Bulgaria should undoubtedly express the need to expand the geographical distribution and strengthen the integrity between the separate regional communities in a common single and economically stable sustainable market. Undoubtedly, spatial development is an essential element of the general process of development of human society. Insofar as in its very name, in its quantitative sense, it contains the expansion of anthropogenic intervention in nature, the analysis of processes and its management are an important part of the general actions for sustainable development. The strategic and geopolitical situation of our country is evidenced by the fact that five of the ten European corridors tangent or cross the territory of Bulgaria (5). This circumstance obliges us to approach extremely soberly and at the same time dynamically in determining both the routes of the Euro-corridors and the order of their laying, as well as to analyze the geoeconomic significance of the passes that are located in its territory. The right choice would be the result of an analytical assessment (from a politico-geographical and geopolitical point of view) of the situation around the construction of each of the routes (6). Important for the development and accessibility of the passes is their efficient infrastructure. From a geoeconomic point of view, infrastructure is the engine of mutual economic penetration. In the age of global business, it is the first and necessary condition for the sustainable development of mankind. The mutual opening of the territories to each other through good communication links makes possible the efficient use of natural and human resources, removes barriers to good practices, stimulates economies to move forward (1).

Territorial location and characteristics of the passes in Bulgaria

In Bulgaria most of the passes are located in the Balkan Mountains as a connection between Northern and Southern Bulgaria, as well as in the Rhodopes and Southwestern Bulgaria. In general, the passes are more part of the history of Bulgaria. Starting the dagger, we look within the Balkan Mountains, we will first stop at the Vitinya pass and the Arabakonak pass (6). Vitinya is the name of a saddle and pass in the western Stara Planina,

as well as a tunnel on the Hemus highway next to the saddle. The Vitinya saddle is located in the western part of Stara Planina between Etropolevska planina and Murgash peak. To the north it borders with the valley of the Bebreš River, and to the south - with that of the Makotsevska River. The saddle is a natural way for cold air currents to penetrate from northern to southern Bulgaria. The saddle was used as a passage at a time when the Thracians and Romans lived on Bulgarian lands. The first road through the Vitinya Pass was laid by Midhat Pasha around 1865, there is a road since 1934. The Vitinya Road Tunnel is the first tunnel on the Hemus highway, as far as Sofia. It consists of two pipes with a cross section of 86 m² and a length of 1125 m each. Vitinya is of great strategic importance for the transport connections between Sofia and Northern Bulgaria. In the future, the approaches to Vitinya may be important for the connection with the sub-Balkan first-class road Sofia-Karlovo (Vitinya-Gorno Kamartsi-Dolno Kamartsi), on the other hand in the possible construction of the Rila highway, whose continuation after Ihtiman in the direction Vakarel-Elin Pelin - Stolnik - Eleshnitsa, will create conditions to further load the pass. This requires in geoeconomic aspect the passage to receive additional funds from the national budget for its modernization and development as an important infrastructure site of strategic importance for the national economy (7). The other important pass in this part of the Balkan Mountains is the Arabakonak Pass. In fact, Arabakonak is a pass in the Balkan Mountains, through which in the past the main road from Sofia to Botevgrad and Northern Bulgaria passed. Several important events in the new history of Bulgaria take place in it. On September 22, 1872, the Arabakonak robbery was committed in the passage. During the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) in the winter (November-December) of 1877, fierce fighting took place in the pass between Russian and Ottoman troops. On April 14, 1925, a group of anarchists organized an assassination attempt on Tsar Boris III in the Arabakonak Pass. All types of road classes are available around the Arabakonak Pass, including the nearby Hemus Motorway. Of course, today's significance of Arabakonak is much less, but through it a natural link can be built between the Hemus Motorway and the sub-Balkan roads. In general, the national road in the region of Vitinya and Arabakonak can have an important impact, because to the north of them the network is cross-developed as of great importance for the development of this region are the cities of Botevgrad and Pravets. The two cities are centers adjacent to the main transport routes, but unfortunately the town of Etropole remains a bit isolated, and those located to the north of Yablanitsa and Teteven are doomed to form a new core. In this part, Botevgrad is important, which with the construction of the highway section in the direction Botevgrad-Mezdra-Vratsa-Montana, will have an important connecting function.. In this part of the country of important strategic importance is the crossing of the main transport corridor of the passing route of the highway (AM) "Hemus" and the first class road 3 (E-83) in the direction Sofia-Yablanitsa and the continuation to Veliko Tarnovo (E-772). and Pleven (E-83). The presence of these main arteries determines the attractiveness of the area, its accessibility and heavy traffic. In the coming years it is possible to think and build a new route on the road Yablanitsa-Lukovit-Pleven in order to create conditions for regional development of the smaller municipalities of Lovech and Plaven regions, which are in the gravity zone of the highway Hemus. The road artery providing access to Southern Bulgaria from Northern Bulgaria on the highway II-37 Dzhurovo-Etropole-Zlatitsa is also important, it is the main artery of the second-class road network. This artery is not particularly busy due to the poor asphalt coverage, the traffic of mainly heavy trucks, and its insurability during the winter season due to the passage through the high parts of the Balkan Mountains. Another important transport artery is emerging in the direction Botevgrad-Mezdra-Vratsa-Montana-Vidin, which is one of the possible routes along the European transport corridor №4, this leads to additional load on the traffic flow at the approaches to the pass "Vitinya". In the direction Botevgrad-Mezdra the road in reconstruction and construction up to 4 lane road, but it is not clear whether by 2025 it will be completed. This route will certainly improve safety and increase road throughput. From a geoeconomic point of view, Mezdra will have a faster, more convenient and secure connection with the Hemus Motorway if this route is built. On the other hand, due to its proximity to Sofia, about 60-70 km away, the cities of Botevgrad, Pravets and Etropole have the opportunity to develop as a developing secondary center with an emphasis on the sustainability of the regional economy and the search for ways to reduce disparities in development. municipalities and settlements (7). This will create conditions for regional integration, in which a third round can be formed around Yablanitsa, Mezdra and Teteven. From an economic point of view, in these settlements there is a tendency to increase the share of micro-firms in the manufacturing industry, trade and services and transport. The average number of employees in small companies in the processing industry is also increasing. The weaknesses of the cities in the region are in terms of tourism development and the level of public services(4). To a large extent, the cities are peripheral to the capital. The movement of the labor force, in the majority of the employed persons, estimated through the daily labor trips, is carried out mainly in the direction - (50% of the employed) - Sofia. The infrastructure of general education in the cities of the region (school buildings, number of classrooms and classrooms, etc.) has a capacity corresponding to the number of students, in the cities of Pravets and Botevgrad there is one higher school. The Iskar Gorge is also of great strategic importance for the economic relations between the capital and Northern Bulgaria. The railway line in the direction Sofia-Svoje-Mezdra-Pleven-Gorna Oryahovitsa-Varna was built in this direction. The settlements in the Iskar Gorge are entirely connected with the economy of the capital as only the town of Svoje has a satisfactory local significance.

To the west of the Iskar Gorge is the Petrohan Pass, colloquially called Petrohan. It is a pass in the Balkan Mountains. It is located 1444 m above sea level and is located 30 km northwest of Sofia and 25 km south of Berkovitsa. This is the road from Sofia to Berkovitsa, and from there to Varshets, Montana, Lom, Vidin. The pass is long and with many bends, but with a small slope, therefore, it remains passable in winter, even with incompletely cleared snow (8).

There are plans since the 70s of the twentieth century for the construction of a tunnel under Mount Petrohan, which would greatly facilitate travel to northwestern Bulgaria and would select our connection with Romania. The tunnel will shorten the distance from Sofia to Vidin by 100 km, and to Vratsa will be only 30 km. With the progress of the project for a second bridge over the Danube near the town of Vidin, the tunnel project is becoming relevant again in the context of Corridor 4. Its financing is planned as a public-private partnership. Around the pass Petrohan is the only place in the Balkan Mountains where the rare species of alpine newt is found. On the other side of Vitinya to the east within the Balkan Mountains is the Zlatishki Pass. This pass connects the towns of Zlatitsa and Etropole. Its highest part is the Kashana saddle, often called the whole passage. At the beginning of the pass, on its southern side, is the village of Tsarkvishte. Second-class road 37 of the Republican Road Network passes through the pass, which directly connects the sub-Balkan line with the A2 highway, but due to the inability of the state to maintain it, the pass is often closed all year round. With the new increased traffic, the need for alternative routes Yablanitsa-Dzhurovo-Etropole-Zlatitsa-Panagyurishte-Popintsi-Gelemenovo-Trakia.

Motorway may be important for the national road infrastructure for the connection between Northwestern Bulgaria with Southern Bulgaria as an alternative route. Of course, this area needs additional repairs and maintenance to increase its security and reliability and thus effectively use the Zlatitsa Pass for the geoeconomic development of this mountainous part of Bulgaria. To the east of the Zlatitsa Pass in the sub-Balkan direction we reach the Troyan Pass. The famous Troyan Pass (Beklemeto) is a mountain pass in the western part of the Troyan-Kalofer part of Stara Planina, at an altitude of 1525 m. A road passes through it, one of the highest in Stara Planina, which connects the village of Karnare with Troyan. There are many sharp turns. However, the view is amazing. The pass is one of the main roads connecting northern and southern Bulgaria. It is about 50 km long, and its highest point is 1,565 m above sea level. (Beklemeto). In some places in the area are preserved fragments of the ancient Roman road, the famous Via Trayana - the road of Trajan. Here, during the time of the Roman emperor Trajan Augustus, the construction of the road artery with fortresses around it began. To the north of the pass was the roadside station Ad Radices, to the south - Sub Radices, and in the area of Beklemeto - the ridge road station Montemno (Monte Aemo). Its foundations are still visible. Gathering several settlement paths, the road passed through nine Thracian settlements and fortifications in the area of Troyan municipality, the tourist town of Beklemeto, Kurt Hissar peak (Wolf Fortress) to the southeast and descended to the area of the village of Hristo Danovo. The route is part of the road Escus - Philippopolis, which made one of the most direct connections from the Danube Limes to the province of Thrace. It connected the Danube with the Central Road, crossing Hemus through today's Troyan Pass.

Near the Troyan Pass is the monument (arch) on Goraltepe Peak, located 15 minutes walk east of the highest point of the Beklemeto Pass. It can be reached by a narrow, asphalt road, on the south side of the ridge, through the Kostov Polugar area, covered with extensive pastures. The arch depicts bandits, Russian soldiers, women in traditional costumes through bas-reliefs. The top part of the monument is a platform from which to the north you can see the valleys of Beli Osam and Troyan, and to the south there is a view of Sredna Gora, the Rhodopes and Rila. From a geoeconomic point of view, the use of the pass is of little importance due to the difficult terrain and its height, but in the spring and summer months the pass can be used especially by cars as part of the connection between South and North Bulgaria to facilitate and unload (8). To the east of Beklemeto is the Shipka Pass. Shipka Pass is a mountain pass in the Balkan Mountains at an altitude of 1,185 meters. The pass is one of the most important road connections between Northern and Southern Bulgaria, the road between the towns of Kazanlak and Gabrovo passes through it. This pass is a natural economic connection between the cities on both sides of the Balkan Mountains. It is also part of the transport corridor №9. On the other hand, near the pass is the Shipka monument (1928-1934, architect Atanas Donkov, sculptor Alexander Andreev), erected in honor of the battles of the Bulgarian Volley and Russian troops against the Ottoman army to protect the pass during the Russo-Turkish War of Liberation. Today the Shipka Pass is the natural connection in the direction "Ruse - Stara Zagora (Plovdiv)" - I-4 (E 772), which serve the connections in the main directions - north-south and east-west. In the approach to the pass there are three road sections to the ridge of Stara Planina - "Tryavna - Krastets", "Gabrovo - Shipka peak" and "Gabrovo - Uzana locality" with important importance for the region around the plateau. The mountainous and semi-mountainous character of the relief determine the territorial development of urbanization and transport connections, including their specific problems. On the other hand, the analysis of the data around the Shipka Pass imposes the increasingly important place and the need to complete the transport corridor № 9, which connects the countries of Northeast Europe via Romania and Bulgaria with the port of Alexandroupolis on the White Sea (as part of road I-5 / E-85 / Ruse-Tarnovo-Gabrovo-

Stara Zagora-Haskovo-Kardzhali-Makaza) -especially important in the route passing through the territory of Gabrovo region. Part of this project envisages the construction of a road tunnel through the Shipka Pass. The other no less important part is the completion of the so-called "Western bypass road" of the town of Gabrovo. This is a site, partially completed and with current project readiness. It is extremely important in order to divert the transit traffic flow from the city to the pass and other roads. The two sub-sites of the route of this transport corridor have a crucial role in the transport infrastructure at national and regional level with their complex impact on the development of the district (8). The communicative capabilities of the region are basic factors for future planning in all spheres of life of the local population. This defines the place of the transport strategy for the region as a structure-determining and priority one, as the realization of this infrastructure project in the process of its functioning will create flows of trade and economic exchange, which will contribute to the economic recovery. Another important pass of key importance for North-South traffic is the Republic Pass or Hainboaz is a pass in the Balkan Mountains that connects Gurkovo (Stara Zagora region) and Veliko Tarnovo. It is the most direct road connection between the border with Romania and Ruse with Turkey and Greece. The road was widened and filled with permanent pavement during the period 1946-1947 by the brigade movement of the Communist Party. In the sixties of the last century it was paved. Until recently, the road in the passage was paved. Currently, the route is widened and has a perfect pavement, as most of the road has three lanes, but on the northern side of Stara Planina repair work was barely completed in the summer of 2009. Of course, the route needs improvement. This implies the development and creation of opportunities for optimal traffic management through it and its year-round use. The route Debelets-Kilifarevo-Pass of the Republic-Gurkovo-N.Zagora-Svilengrad, connecting the area with Southern Bulgaria, is expected to become as convenient for travel as it is from Gurkovo to Predela and thus to create conditions for more effective interaction between Veliko Tarnovo and Stara Zagora regions. The road II-53 from Polikraishte-G. Oryahovitsa-Lyaskovets-Elena-pass "Vratnik" - Sliven can also be important and can also be an important condition for improving the geo-economic development between Northern and Southern Bulgaria. The Kotel Pass is also important, connecting. Omurgat-Kotel-Gradets and the road junction Petolachkata or II-48 Omurtag-Kotel-Gradets (Sliven) in the North-South direction. To the east is the Varbishki Pass. It is a pass in the Eastern Balkan Mountains, located 7 km south of the town of Varbitsa. In the Varbishki Pass Bulgaria achieved one of its greatest medieval victories, in which Khan Krum defeated the Byzantine army and beheaded its leader - Emperor Nicephorus I. From a geoeconomic point of view, the Varbishki Pass is important for Northeastern Bulgaria, because the route of road I-7, which connects the border with Romania, passes through it. Silistra - op Dulovo - op Shumen - op Velik Preslav - Varbitsa - Beronovo - Marasha - op. Yambol - op Elhovo - Granitovo - Melnitsa - Lesovo - the border with Turkey. Through the Lesovo border checkpoint there is a connection between Turkey - Bulgaria - Romania in the direction of the first class road I-7, unloading the particularly intensive traffic in the directions of road II - 55 Svilengrad - N. Zagora - Veliko Tarnovo - Ruse and road I-5 Svilengrad - Dimitrovgrad - St. Zagora - Gabrovo - Veliko Tarnovo - Ruse. In the future, a connection with Trakia Motorway will be established in the direction of road I-7. The road on the territory of Shumen district makes the connection between the regional center with the northern and southern peripheral territories. In 5 km of buffer around the route are concentrated respectively 37% of the settlements and 64% of the population of the district. To the south, the route crosses the Trakia Motorway, passes through Yavbol and continues to the Republic of Turkey (8).

To the east of the historic Varbishki Pass is the Rishki Pass. The Rishki Pass is a saddle in the eastern part of the Balkan Mountains, in its Kotlen-Varbishki part. To the south lies the valley of the river Luda Kamchia, to the north leads to Shumen. The highway from Karnobat to Shumen, which passes through the Rishki Pass, is one of the main transport links between Southern and Northern Bulgaria through the Eastern Stara Planina. Important of the Rishki Pass is its connection of Shumen and Smyadovo with Karnobat and Trakia Motorway. In fact, this road direction may be an alternative to the movement of heavy goods vehicles in the north-south and southeast-northwest directions, because in general. The Rishki Pass can be used almost all year round, is relatively easy to pass and is located in the relatively lower part of the Balkan Mountains. Of course, there is something to be desired from the state administration regarding the Rishki Pass. For example, in certain steep parts, building a third lane, straightening some turns, as well as reducing the slope of the route in its most difficult parts. On the southern side of the Rishki Pass are the municipalities of Sungalare and Karnobat, on the north of them is the dam "Kamchia", and on the north are Veselinovo, Smyadovo and Shumen. This suggests that by creating conditions for fast, safe and reliable crossing of the pass will create conditions for the development of the two regions of the northern and southern part of Stara Planina, especially since the regions themselves are important for the Bulgarian Black Sea coast and possible tourist flow and labor force during the active tourist season in Bulgaria.

In recent years, the Aytos Pass may have been of great strategic importance in Eastern Bulgaria. This is a mountain pass (saddle) between Karnobatska Mountain in the west and Aytos Mountain in the east (parts of Eastern Stara Planina), in Aytos Municipality and Ruen Municipality, Bourgas district. The length of the pass is 10.8 kilometers with an altitude of the saddle of 394 meters. The pass has exceptional features and opportunities to improve the connectivity between Sliven, Yambol, Burgas, Shumen and Varna regions. The Aytos Pass

connects the valley of the Aytos River to the south with the valley of the Golyama River (right tributary of the Luda Kamchia River) to the northwest. The pass starts from the northern end of the town of Aytos at 142 m above sea level. and after 7 km climbs the saddle, then after 3.8 km descends to the western end of the village of Yabalchevo (Ruen Municipality) at 223 meters above sea level (3).

The easternmost pass that we will consider is the Dyulin Pass. It is a mountain pass in the Eastern Stara Planina. The Dyulin Pass separates the Aytos Mountain from the Emona Mountain and is the easternmost Stara Planina Pass. A first-class road from the national road network, which connects Burgas and Varna, passes through it. The altitude of the pass is approximately 450 m. The passage owes its name to the village of Dyulino, Varna region. In fact, the Dyulin pass may be part of the route of the Black Sea Motorway, this may be possible because car traffic is significantly higher than the permeability of the road Burgas-Pomorie-Aheloy-Sunny Beach-Obzor. The built bypass along Pomorie, Aheloy, Ravda and flowing into Sunny Beach is of great strategic importance for the improvement of the regional economic development of this part of the Black Sea coast. By the summer of 2022, a bypass of Burgas in the northern direction is expected to be built, which will take the traffic out of the city. This infrastructure will undoubtedly be favorable for the construction of the Black Sea highway. In this regard, it is necessary after Sarafovo, three kilometers from the airport in the direction of Pomorie to make a breakthrough in the direction of Tankovo, which bypasses the town of Pomorie, Aheloy and a kilometer before Tankovo to separate a part for Sunny Beach and Nessebar, and the main route to continue along Tankovo, Orizare, Gyulovtsa, Dyulinski Prohod, as near the village of Dyulino to have a fork for the town of Obzor, and near the village of Rudnik to have a fork for the town of Byala, then the road to continue through the village of Detelina, v. Ravna gora, the village of Bolyartsi, the village of Benkovski and is included in the developed part of the Black Sea Motorway to the city of Varna (2).

. In this way, a route will be built, in which the Dyulin Pass will be of key importance. Such construction of an alternative route connecting Burgas and Varna will create conditions for car traffic to be significantly alleviated and will create conditions for greater security and rapid movement from the two largest cities on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast and their adjacent resorts. On the other hand, in the Varna district of part of the territory of Aksakovo municipality, Avren municipality, D. Chiflik municipality and Byala municipality are currently connected by a first-class road I-9 (E 87 Durankulak - Varna - Burgas - Malko Tarnovo). The bad thing is that this time it does not have the necessary permeability in the active summer season and is quite dangerous. It should be borne in mind that the route rehabilitated under the Transit Roads program more than 15 years ago is not very good and the route of 8.6 km. from the Black Sea highway in the direction of Bourgas. For the continuation of the highway it is necessary for it to pass through the Dyulin Pass. As we can note, all the passes in Stara Planina have their historical and geoeconomic significance for the development of the national territory. It is important to have an economic plan and in order to achieve balanced spatial development, we must clearly realize that the passes have their own connecting and communication link between the individual settlements in the country and help the sustainable development of the whole country. In the existing national economy, preference has always been given to the capital, but the problems of Sofia as a city are related to population growth, which in about 30-40 years will undoubtedly have a population of about or even over 3 million. This, of course, means the search for opportunities for the capital to unload the flow of passing vehicles, construction of new roads and routes (3).

From a geo-economic point of view, Sofia needs to be significantly unloaded by transport and, above all, alternative routes should be built around the capital along transport corridors №4, 8 and 10. From Sofia in the direction of Plovdiv and Bourgas passes the Trakia Motorway, which after Ihtiman passes through the Trayanovi Vrata pass. It is a historic pass near Ihtiman, and nowadays the name of a tunnel on the Trakia highway. The pass is named after the Roman emperor Trajan, with whom the existing fortress is connected. It was studied in 1975 during excavations led by Dimitrina Djonova. The date of the original construction of the fortress is unknown, and the first written information about it is from the 3rd century. [1] The fortress is also known as Stipon. In antiquity, the pass was named Succi (Latin: Succi), and next to it was built a fortification and road station named Soneium (Latin: Soneium). In general, in this direction the capital has the necessary infrastructure, which does not create problems and at the same time provides fast connections with Pazardzhik, Plovdiv and by building the Maritsa Motorway in the direction of Svilengrad and Istanbul (5).

. But there are still deficits in other areas. For example, Sofia will be helped by the possibility of building a Rila highway. It is a project for a highway in Western Bulgaria and should connect the Struma, Trakia and Hemus highways, passing near Dupnitsa and Samokov. At Iskar Dam the route is divided into two branches. The first reaches the Trakia highway near Mirovo, and the second exits it at Vakarel, then from Novi Khan along Elin Pelin and reaches the Hemus highway at Potop. The approximate length of the route is about 80 km, the rapid construction of the Northern Arc of the Trakia highway near Sofia, a reliable connection between Vakarel, Elin Pelin and the Hemus highway to reduce transit through Sofia in the direction of Northwestern Bulgaria. Rapid design activities and measures are needed to complete the western arc of the ring road, the rest of the Sofia highway ring, which by 2021 has been built in a significant part. With the completion of the Europe Highway, the Western Arc will be very important for traffic in the capital. In general, Sofia needs a new spatial approach to

development. This necessitates the construction of a new freight railway station near Sofia, as well as the construction of a new airport terminal around Vakarel, Mramor, Ihtiman or Bozhurishte. The capital has new infrastructure needs that will increase the area of gravity. However, the most complicated problem remains the possibility for more flexible use of the potential of the Lyulin highway and the Vladyaski Pass. The Vladyaski Pass is a pass in Western Bulgaria, dividing the Vitosha and Lyulin mountains. It connects the cities of Sofia and Pernik. In fact, it is the gateway to Sofia in the Pernik, Kyustendil and Blagoevgrad regions, plus the traffic coming in the direction of Corridor №4 from Thessaloniki and Corridor №8 from Skopje (4). An additional complication to the pass near Vladyaska is that in this part are also the villages of Vladyaska, Rudartsi, Studena and others, which are used by the citizens of Sofia as places for rest and relaxation. In general, even if the pass is widened, it will not be able to have the necessary permeability over the years, so in addition to the Lyulin highway, it is necessary to build at least one panoramic road above Vladyaska and a first-class route in Lyulin Mountain. includes in Sofia. In recent years, the city of Pernik is also important for the capital. A large part of its population works in Sofia and is part of the capital's economy due to the deteriorating economic situation in Pernik and the region. In previous years, the town of Radomir, which has recently been in industrial decline, has played an important strategic role in the economy of the Pernik region. The connection between Pernik and Radomir is realized through the Ushite pass. Ushite is a pass in Western Bulgaria, through which passes the road between the towns of Pernik and Radomir and the river Struma. To the south of Pernik, the Struma Motorway has started to stand still and is progressing slowly. It crosses Kyustendil and Blagoevgrad districts and reaches our southern border at the Kulata border checkpoint. In the southwestern part of the country, three passes are important, which I will consider. One is the Predela pass. Predel is the saddle that separates Pirin from Rila and at the same time connects the settlements of Razlog field (Razlog, Bansko, Dobrinishte, Belitsa) with those of the Struma river valley (Simitli, Blagoevgrad, Kresna). A first class road from Simitli to Razlog, Bansko and Gotse Delchev passes through Predel. In 2005, rehabilitation and widening of the road to take over the increased tourist traffic to Bansko began. The highest point is 1142 m. It is assumed that the border is 7 kilometers long from the so-called Fountain of N. Parapunov to Boykov rid - the last hill before Razlog. This place is ideal for relaxation and there are over ten resorts built, which offer more than 1000 beds (7). There is a ski slope called Kulinoto, 1300 m long. Since 1965 the folklore festival Pirin sings has been held in the area, in which folk groups from all over the country sing. The border has historical significance with the fact that here in October 1878 the beginning of the Kresna-Razlog uprising against the Berlin Treaty was set. To the east of it, around the town of Gotse Delchev, are Popovi Livadi. Popovi Livadi or Papaz Chair is a saddle between Middle and South Pirin, whose highest point is located at an altitude of 1430 m. It is 1.5 km long and 0.5 km wide. It includes several smaller areas Galabova Polyana, Wallachian Church, Vasilyova Mandra, Punkta, Seyryanlaka and others. Popovi livadi is 4-5 sunny meadows, surrounded on all sides by coniferous forest (mostly white pine, but also common spruce and white fir). A first-class road from the town of Gotse Delchev to Petrich, Sandanski and Melnik passes through them. The area is rich in mushrooms and berries, as well as clear streams. It is an ideal place for a holiday in Pirin. Here is the hut Popovi Livadi, as well as many holiday resorts (Bulgartabac, Communications, Forestry). Recently, private villas have appeared, which offer beds (Brezite villas), as well as many villas are being built for the people of Gotse Delchev. There is also a student camp, which is open all year round. In 1967 the area was declared a climatic mountain resort. The Demir Kapiya Pass is located in the most southwestern parts of Bulgaria. Demir Kapiya or Demir Kapu is a saddle and pass in the Belasitsa mountain. It is located at an altitude of 1686 meters on the main ridge, west of the peak Radomir peak and east of Lozen peak. The state border between Bulgaria and Greece passes through the saddle. Until the beginning of the 20th century, a tenant's road passed through Demir Kapiya, connecting Petrich with the Sersko Pole. From here, in 1014, the bypass detachment of Nicephorus Xyphius passed, which dealt a decisive blow to the back of King Samuel's troops during the Battle of Belasitsa. The area is famous for the fact that on October 19, 1925 the famous Petrich incident began here (8).

During the Cold War, the saddle was mined by the Greek side. In the 80s of the XX century it was renamed the Iron Gate, but this name did not gain popularity among the locals and tourists. The main starting point for the ascent of Demir Kapiya is the village of Samuilovo, from where a marked hiking trail begins, which can take about 3 hours to reach the saddle. An 18-kilometer truck road leads from the same village to the pass, which is gravel to the Lopovo locality. With the Demir Kapiya pass we complete our review of the passes in Southwestern Bulgaria (5).

Important strategic importance for the geoeconomic development of Bulgaria and have several passes that pass through the Rhodopes. In the first place it is the Aegean Pass. This is a pass in the Rhodopes and a traditional road connecting Plovdiv with Xanthi in Aegean Thrace. From north to south the road passed along the Chepelarska River, through Rozhen and today's town of Smolyan and descended on the southern slopes of the Rhodopes to Xanthi. At the beginning of the 20th century the road through the Aegean Pass was interrupted by the border between Bulgaria and Greece. Between the Balkan Wars and the First World War, when Aegean Thrace was part of Bulgaria, the construction of a railway line through the pass was planned, and the section from Plovdiv to Asenovgrad was built. During the occupation of White Sea Thrace by Bulgaria during the

Second World War, these plans were renewed, but no practical action was taken. An important part of the Aegean Pass occupies the national road II-86 (Smolyan - Plovdiv) for the municipalities of Asenovgrad and Lucky, II-58 - providing the connection to II-86 and E80 in settlements in the southeastern part of the municipality of Asenovgrad. An acute specific problem to the approach to the Aegean Road for the city of Plovdiv is the construction of the eastern arc of the ring road of Plovdiv to direct transit traffic flows from the municipalities of Asenovgrad, Rhodope and Kuklen, as well as those from Smolyan region on Trakia Motorway, I-8 / E-80 /, as well as with the municipalities north of the Trakia Motorway (6). The formation of the flows "initial-final goal" is related to the economic activity of the regional center and the modal distribution of freight flows to road and rail transport. The lack of opportunities for widening the routes in the town of Asenovgrad will create difficulties for the increased traffic in the direction of Smolyan and the new border checkpoints near Zlatograd and south of Rudozem. In the Aegean Pass, the Rozhen Pass is important. Rozhen is a saddle pass in the Rhodopes, Bulgaria near the resort of Pamporovo and not far from Smolyan. Folklore festivals are regularly held in the meadows of the area (7). The largest Bulgarian observatory has been built on Rozhen peak above the area. It has several telescopes, the largest of which is 2 meters in diameter. Continuation of this pass is the direction Smolyan-Rudozem-Dimario-Xanthi. This is practically the newest checkpoint between Bulgaria and Greece. It is important for him that all types of road vehicles will be able to move through it. A new panoramic road was built on the Bulgarian side, starting northwest of the village of Chepintsi at 764 m above sea level. and after 5.9 km it ends at the state border of the saddle with a height of 1010 m. It is the final section of 5.9 km of the second-class Republican road II-86 Plovdiv - Smolyan - Rudozem - Rudozem - Xanthi border checkpoint. The Momkov Pass, which is a mountain pass (saddle) in Southern Bulgaria and Northern Greece, may also be of interest. It is located in the southernmost part of the mountain hill Yellow part of the Eastern Rhodopes and is one of the three passes connecting Bulgaria with Aegean Thrace, respectively the valley of the river Varbitsa (right tributary of Arda) with the valley of the river Kuru, left tributary of Sushitsa, in Greek Kompsatos), flowing into the White Sea. Until 1944, the pass was actively used for transportation of goods, cargo, people and animals from Bulgaria to Northern Greece and back, but then it was abandoned and a security network was built along our border, which functioned until the changes of 1989 (8). During 2006 - 2008 between the mayors of the cities of Zlatograd in Bulgaria and Xanthi in Greece, intensive negotiations are underway for the construction of a modern road connection between the two cities and the construction of the Zlatograd - Termes border checkpoint. After that, the construction of the route and the border checkpoint began and on January 15, 2010 the road and the border checkpoint were inaugurated (6).

The other important pass in the Rhodopes is Makaza. The development of Corridor № 9 with the opening of Makaza border checkpoint will increase international transit traffic through the region with all the expected beneficial effects for its overall development. The most important economic center in this direction is the town of Kardzhali. It is the center of Kardzhali district and Kardzhali municipality. Kardzhali is located in the heart of the Eastern Rhodope Mountains, on both banks of the ancient river Arda. The city is located 259 km. from Sofia and 100 km from Plovdiv. Kardzhali is 50 km away from the town of Haskovo and about 15 km from the ancient town of Perperikon. The Pan-European Transport Corridor №9 passes through Kardzhali through the Makaza Pass. The distance from the regional center to the Hellenic Republic will be only 57 km. The internal and international connections of the region are carried out on highways and roads, by rail. lines. On the other hand, the completion of the first class road from Kardzhali to Makaza and the ring road of Kardzhali will improve the intra-regional transport accessibility for the southern parts of the region to the directions conducting intensive flows in its northern part, will join the southern parts, while facilitating access to the rich. their natural resources (7). In fact, the opening of a road link with neighboring Greece is expected to revive the area economically. The opening of the road connection will stimulate the development of productions and activities serving the passenger flow, the freight flow, the movement of capital and services. This is expected to lead to an increase in employment and income (6). The opening of the Makaza border checkpoint will be of key importance for the district. Corridor № 9 through the Makaza pass is expected to become a road of general regional importance in the Southern Balkans for the connection of the district of Kardzhali with the town of Xanthi / Greece /, as well as the district with the town of Alexandroupolis and other cities in the northern part of the Republic. Greece. In the spirit of the ongoing interstate integration in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, such a continuation is naturally necessary. Thus, the main goals of the regional economic development strategy should be the active use of local tourism resources, targeted stimulation and coordination of investment activity of the public and private sector to ensure highly efficient forms of domestic and international tourism (5).

Conclusion

The construction and strengthening of the infrastructure of the Bulgarian passes is an important element of the European vision for connectivity. Under normal conditions, Bulgaria turns out to be an important transport territory in the North-South and East-West direction, and to a large extent the optimal transport infrastructure of the country is a guarantee for the ongoing integration processes within the European Union. Thus, in terms of easy passage of the passages, an investment policy is needed to set sustainable results. On the other hand, the

construction of the infrastructure around the passes is a necessary condition from an economic and social, as well as from a geo-economics point of view for improving the development between Southern and Northern Bulgaria. Because improving the connectivity through the passes will not only contribute to the rapprochement between the people on both sides of the passes or the cities and territories of the respective region, but will also help strengthen the Bulgarian economic positions for sustainable development of the national territory. In addition, this will create conditions for promoting regional economic development and reducing disparities in the country's development. This is an important state issue and further delays in resolving it will work directly against our own national interests. Because the weakness of the road network as a whole is the insufficient construction of bypass roads, due to which the car traffic transits through a large number of settlements. Another problem is the need, according to the international commitments undertaken by the country, to increase the carrying capacity of the road surface to 11.5 t / axle in the main directions of international transport. The identification of core networks in some of the neighboring regions has helped to some extent to address the weaknesses of the pan-European corridors / areas. Regional action plans set out in a regional development policy aim to improve the implementation of this policy and the infrastructure of the regional transport systems and especially for the geo-economic development of the country. The strengthening and infrastructural security of the Bulgarian passes is essential not only for the regional development of Bulgaria, but also for the Bulgarian economic integration of Southeast Europe. In practice, through their modernization, the territory of Bulgaria will be easier for the transport traffic of European countries, we will become a more preferred way and direction for the movement of goods, services and cargo. This will have a positive impact on the spatial development of Bulgarian cities and regions.

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