Plan for Local Inclusive Development in Tourism: Case Study of the Municipality of Konce, Republic of Macedonia

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Abstract

Inclusive development is an important component in the creation of services of local communities. This applies in particular to regions that are located in areas that haven’t experienced dynamic development in the past. The lack of such services leads to regression and permanent stagnation of possible development elements. The example of the municipality of Konce is showing that encouraging development can be suggested in the field of tourism services through a process of tourist valorization and organization of relevant actors in the area. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct field research, surveying opinions of the key players and other concerned parties. These studies show that tourism can be an accelerator of natural and cultural heritage in the municipality of Konce. Through this process of regional research development priorities have been determined, which based on the organization and usage of human and other resources can stimulate the development in these regions.

*Keywords: Inclusive development, tourism resources, human resources, tourism development.*

**Introduction**

The municipality of Konce is located in the southeastern part of the Republic of Macedonia at a distance of 150 km from Skopje on the right side of the road Radovish - Strumica. Konce is a typical rural municipality surrounded by Konecka Mountain and Smrdesnik or the municipalities Stip, Negotino, Demir Kapija, Valandovo Strumica Vasilevo and Radovish. Within the municipality of Konce included are 14 villages. The municipality of Konce belongs to the group of underdeveloped municipalities. It represents a typical rural region. The proximity of the municipality of Radovish provides intensive cooperation and collaboration, especially in the local and micro-regional economic development. In this sense, an important role has the collaboration with the municipality of Stip which belongs to the group of more developed municipalities. At the regional level, the municipality of Konce cooperates well within ZELS and the Eastern planning region. The municipality has at its disposal a significant number of natural and anthropogenic resources that can be put into operation of its dynamic development. The key priorities that the municipality should use are the clean ecological environment and the management of natural resources. Resources that are significant to highlight are the following:

* Rich vegetative content of different tree and grass species;
* Presence of different species of wild game;
* Littoral and coastal potential of the lake;
* Significant fish stocks;
* Quality drinkable water.

Furthermore, the municipality has a rich cultural heritage, given the fact that in the past it represented a medieval episcopal center. Konce was a medieval town that had its beginnings as a monastery complex and as a religious and administrative center. The monastery church is dedicated to St. Stefan dating from before 1366. The economic sector in the municipality is poorly developed. This is due to the fact that the dominant activity is agriculture, which is at a low level of development. The company "Eco milk" is an economic entity which achieves positive economic results and can represent the engine for future development of the municipality. This is due to the shown interest in this enterprise for involvement in other activities that are not in the domain of production and distribution of milk and dairy products. The non-governmental sector in the municipality is poorly active. This means that special attention should be given to the creation of development policies. The following NGO’s can be mentioned:

* Association for hunting and fishing “Studenec”;
* Women Association “Konechanka”.

So far the municipality has implemented public-private partnerships such as:

* Concession of the hunting ground Konce;
* Concession of the lake Mantovo for fishing activities (in progress).

However, the opportunities are widened specifically with the creation of the holiday settlement Mantovo, organizing and putting into function a part of the coastal area of Mantovo as well as the use of the water resources.

Studies have revealed several segments that could be in the context of accelerating the municipality’s development. There are opportunities for cooperation in the domains of agriculture, tourism and cultural heritage protection as well as development of local infrastructure. The latter are formed as proposals with clear determined structure for implementation trough training in the following:

* Indigenous private houses and interiors for rural tourism activities;
* Encouraging the development of religious tourism;
* Concession processes for evaluation in coastal and littoral areas of the lake Mantovo;
* Production and distribution of drinking water.

**Methodology**

The municipality of Konce as a rural municipality covers an area that includes 14 settlements of which 6 villages are active and can be part of the development strategy. It represents a rare natural area with clean environment and has a large forest and water potential. The lakes Mantovo, Konce I and Konce II should also be mentioned as important potentials. Despite its rural character, the municipality of Konce shows developmental processes that in the last years stopped the process of immigration. That is an important indicator and opportunity for the return of the population in the municipality of Konce.

The municipality is active in international IPA projects such as *Culture in the function of development of Konce* in partnership with a municipality of the Republic of Bulgaria. The active municipal administration headed by the Mayor can be highlighted as the basic factor for development in the municipality.

Survey research within the determining the situation and development capabilities as well as the obtained primary parameters indicate the possibility for determining specific projects and project activities in the community that can be implemented through social and other forms of public - private partnerships and opportunities for concession.

The ***methodological approach*** in the determination of development opportunities in the municipality relies on five relevant operational activities:

* Revision of the adopted strategies, plans and development programs in which have to be recognized the undertaken activities and development opportunities. The municipality has a strategy for local economic development, which is shared with the municipality of Radovish, but there is no specific strategy for social development. A separate document in this regard is an urban design document for the solar lake settlement - Mantovo. The municipality does not have adopted programs for the social conditions and demographic development. The same applies to the program for environmental development and protection.
* Analysis study on citizens' satisfaction with municipal services within the project for strengthening the public policies based on empirical indicators. The study on citizens' satisfaction with the municipal services within the project for strengthening the public policies is based on empirical indicators. It recommends screening of relevant local / regional / national private sector and civil society, which have a wide network, good reputation and are capable of mobilizing young people and other specific vulnerable groups. The study points to the need to generate social partnerships for inclusive service delivery as well as establishing cooperation for inclusive local development. Mapping of models (existing and potential) for social entrepreneurship can also be performed – corporate social responsible initiatives that can attract investments in a local context, supporting the development of the municipality through culture and tourism.
* Survey with a questionnaire conducted *face to face* with officials of the municipal administration and significant people in the business community as well as experts of the situation. In the municipality we conducted a survey on the stakeholders to be able to identify the significant advantages and disadvantages in the development of the municipality.
* Field surveys and visit of the development players in the community. In order specifically to determine the opportunities and to perform the valorization of certain segments for development we selected field research activities which enabled us detailed defining and determining locations and objects for the development of the municipality.
* Reconciliation of the preliminary findings and initiatives by the expert team with the actors of the local social and economic development of the municipality. Within the mutual relations of the research team and the developmental actors it was required to harmonize the adopted research results with the planned developmental documents and actors’ visions for local economic development.

**Discussion**

It is important to mention the relevant local / regional **actors** from the private sector, public sector and non-governmental organizations in the municipality of Konce.

* *Local authorities* in the municipality have played an important role in its development through numerous implemented projects in the area of culture, spatial planning, tourism, then infrastructural activities such as water supply, sewerage, as well as construction and reconstruction of roads.
* *State institutions* also contribute to the development of the municipality, but there still are needed improvements, especially in the infrastructure. As planned activities by the state can be mentioned the reconstruction of the road Radovish - Konce, the planning of the road section in the area of ​​Negotino as well as future projects for generating energy efficiency - using solar and wind energy.
* Within the *business community* as a potential development factor emerges only the form LLC "Eco milk", which at the moment conducts major economic activities in the municipality.
* As for the existing *non-governmental organizations* in the municipality, they possess very limited capacity to represent a more significant development factor in the municipality. The reason for this situation is detected in the poor educational structure of the population. Typical is the indifference by the people for activities within the non-governmental sector and the lack of economic initiative.

It could be concluded that the civil sector is at a very low level, it can even be said that some projects which were undertaken by the civil sector such as the “Project for national cuisines” are institutionalized through the municipality because the NGO lacks the capacity to implement them. The involvement of NGOs from the neighboring municipality of Radovish should be aimed at strengthening the capacity of NGOs in the municipality of Konce by introducing some forms of public - private partnership. That refers to the possibility of implementation of public - private partnership and putting it in the function for development of rural tourism in Konce with the renovation of an old farmhouse.

The church board of the St. Stefan monastery in Konce is in the process of registration as an NGO, which would be the implementer of the revitalization activities and putting into tourist operation of the monastery.

A successful example for concession is being realized through the hunting and fishing club "Studenec" which is the concessionaire of the hunting ground Konce and the lake Mantovo

It should be noted that in the area of the municipality Konce between the relevant actors there is a **partnership** which is relatively weak and is implemented within the social sphere. There is no linkage between them into a network that comes down solely to the existence of opportunities that have realistic basis.

Within the **mapping process** of the potentials for inter-municipal cooperation, there is collaboration with the municipalities of Stip and Radovish especially with the municipality of Radovish where an unbreakable demographic, economic and development cooperation exists. That applies to the field of professional assistance for services within human relations.

Within the area of determining the **possibilities for partnership and concessions** through deinstitutionalized forms of partnership the municipality undertakes efforts for introducing the actors to social and public - private partnerships, but there are no realized models for them. Furthermore, communities are familiar with the opportunities for concessions and in this regard the municipality realizes concessions with state institutions in the field of mineral raw materials – such as limestone.

The *perspectives* can be determined:

* Concessions for production and distribution of mineral drinking water;
* Concessions for the beaches of Lake Mantovo.

The municipality has an extraordinary level of interest in the concessions, but the barrier is the *legal limitations* which determine the concessions at a state level in most parts of the business activities.

It is necessary to raise public awareness in this sphere, because although the actors are familiar with *clustering*, yet they are being poorly implemented.

*Tourism* is the basis for the development but it is not defined. The main component of tourism development should be Mantovo, but the existing infrastructure does not comply with tourism development, because:

* There are no investments for realization of programs on the lake Mantovo within the tourism field;
* No valorization has been carried out in tourism terms and
* There are no entities in tourism and hospitality.

This points to the fact that no​​ *categorization and systematization* of objects is carried out, there is no promotional activity within tourism although it is useful to create a mutual tourism offer.

Economic development to improve the skills of the population is poor, ie there are no activities for improving economic development in the area of *training activities*, or no requalification nor continuous learning.

The municipality needs to develop *rural and picnic* tourism. In that sense it was noted the presence of several old houses built in a traditional style and a monastery complex that can provide the basis for implementation of the initial forms of rural tourism by providing accommodation and provision of catering services. The lake Mantovo as an artificial reservoir offers opportunities for combining picnic and recreational activities in the function of development of tourism in the municipality of Konce. In addition to this goes the planned weekend-settlement Mantovo and other accommodation capacities projected with the detailed urban plan for the area. Public-private partnership can be realized according to the positive experiences from the concessions on the Ohrid Lake beaches. This means that partners can be found on the basis of a public appeal. The municipality would receive funds on the basis of concessions for the beach and increased numbers of visitors.

The rich natural resources and the remarkable water quality should be used for implying the economic activities based on the production and distribution of *safe drinking water*. The concessions would be aimed at improving the economic and social conditions in the municipality

**Conclusion**

As a conclusion it is worth mentioning that several concrete projects with clearly defined participants in the public - private partnership have to be structured, with a clear defined timeframe and financial structure.

They would refer to the following activities:

* Private autochthonous houses and rural - commercial yards for rural tourism activities (location municipality of Konce);
* Stimulating the development of religious / monastery tourism by providing accommodation and catering facility in the monastery complex (location municipality of Konce);
* Concession processes in valorization of the coastal and littoral spatial sections on the lake Mantovo (location municipality of Konce - Mantovo).

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