



Summary

The Vukovar-Srijem County can be described as relatively well bordered special component of East Croatian valley, which is determined by reliefic, climatological, ecological, and historical – geographic homogeneity. According to the characteristics of the spatial and geographical structures, it is evident that the physical – geographic elements (geographic location, relief, climate, hydrology, forests, and types of soil) of this county very strongly influenced the changes of directions and dynamics of the demographic processes. Complex historical, political, religious, cultural and economic relations in interaction with favourable natural (physical – geographic) conditions for settling resulted in specific and dynamic population development of Vukovar-Srijem County.

Form the middle of the 19th century until the beginning of 1970s this county was characterized by relatively high rates of demographic growth, which is the result of frequent and strong immigration. Between 1971 and 1991 the population dynamics weakens and the rates of the demographic growth were in stagnation. This is the result of deterioration of the determinants of population development, primarily of the natural change and vital demographic structures, as well as of the increased emigration.

Between 1991 and 2001 the population of the county declined. Total depopulation is a direct consequence of the inherited destabilising factors of the population development from the past, as well as of the Serbian military aggression, which caused relatively high war mortality and forced migrations.

The dominant process in the development of the age and sex structure of the population is demographic ageing, which is determined by constant decline of natality and emigration of the young population in reproduction age. The mentioned processes, that are present in Vukovar-Srijem County for more than thirty years, should be regarded as the cause of the constant deterioration of the

demographic conditions for forming of fertile and working contingents of the population.

One of the biggest problems in the stabilising of the socio-economic development of this county is the increase of spatial population polarisation, especially between urban and rural settlements. Almost 40% of the entire population of the Vukovar-Srijem County is concentrated in three urban settlements.

Demographic and socio-economic revitalisation of the Vukovar-Srijem County must be based on reducing of the further population polarisation, active approach towards the solving of numerous problems and overcoming of the limitation factors by natural, stabile and balanced population development.