

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION

The Středočeský Region lies in the centre of Bohemia. Its area, number of municipalities and population is the largest region in the Czech Republic. The Region's area (11,015 km²) covers almost 14 % of the CR's area and is about 2 times larger than the average area of a region in the CR. The Středočeský Region is surrounding the Capital City of Prague from all sides and borders almost all the Regions of Bohemia except for the Karlovarský Region and Moravian Regions. It has a relatively little broken terrain. The north and east is flat, highlands prevail in the south and southwest. The highest point of the territory is the peak called Tok (865 m above sea level) in the Brdy Mountains in the Příbram District; the lowest point is the riverbed of the Labe River (153 m above sea level) in the Mělník District.

The Region divides into 12 Districts with 10 District Authority Municipalities. By area, the largest is the Příbram District (15 % of the Region's area); the smallest is the Praha-západ District (5 % share). As at 1 January 2003, when the state administration reform came into force, district authorities were cancelled; however, districts as territorial units did not cease to exist. At the same time, territorial districts of municipalities with commissioned local authority of the 2nd level and administrative districts of the municipalities with extended competence of the 3rd level were established. In the Středočeský Region, there are 26 administrative districts of the municipalities with extended powers, which differ a lot as for their size. The biggest administrative district of the municipality with extended powers is the Mladá Boleslav administrative district, which comprises 98 municipalities; on the contrary, the Lysá nad Labem administrative district consists of 9 municipalities only.

In 2011, there were 1,145 municipalities in the Region. The highest number of municipalities is concentrated in the Příbram District (121), while the lowest is in the Mělník District (69). The Region is characteristic with a high representation of municipalities with the number of inhabitants up to two thousand (1 044 municipalities); 42 % of inhabitants live in these municipalities. 82 municipalities received the status of a city, Kladno and Mladá Boleslav are also Statutory Cities. The share of the town population on the total population of the Region was 53 % and was the lowest in the whole Czech Republic. The five largest cities in the region include Kladno, Mlada Boleslav, Příbram, Kolin and Kutna Hora. Středočeský Region has the only county seat of his county, regional office and in the Capital City Prague.

There lived 1,273,094 inhabitants in the Region as at 31 December 2011 and became the most populous region in the Czech Republic. The most populated District was the Kladno District (159 133 inhabitants), over 100,000 inhabitants lived also in the Praha-východ District, the Praha-západ District, the Mladá Boleslav District, the Příbram District and the Mělník District. On the other hand, the least populated was the Rakovník District with almost 56,000 inhabitants. The population density was the highest in the Kladno District, the Praha-západ District and the Praha-východ District (over 200 inhabitants per km²). All these Districts have strong socio-economic ties with Prague and they constitute to some extent the metropolitan background of the Capital City. The lowest density of population was reported in the Rakovník District, the Benešov District, and the Příbram District, where does not exceed 70 inhabitants per km².

Demographic development of the region started to distinctively change in the second half of the 1990s, mainly thanks to construction of satellite settlements in the environs of the City of Prague. The population has been constantly increasing (for fifteen years already) and it is mainly internal migration, which contributes to the population increase. A big amount of especially young people moved into the region setting up their families there due to the good location of the region. Thanks to that, the natural decrease has gradually dropped and starting in 2006 more children are born in the region than there are deaths. The region was the youngest in the Czech Republic as for its average age of the population, which was 40.3 years in 2011.

What significantly influences its economic characteristic is the Region's position. Close ties with the Capital City and dense transportation network make the position of the Region very favourable. The Region is an important source of labour force for Prague; it supplements the Prague's industry, supplies Prague with food, and provides to Prague its recreation potential.

The Středočeský Region has the second densest (after Prague), but also the most overloaded transport network in the CR. Main railway and road transit networks lead in a historical radial arrangement over the territory of the Region to the Capital City. Water transport is also present in the Region. The only waterway in the Czech Republic for internal and international transport is the Labsko-vltavská (Labe-Vltava) waterway with about 75 % passing through the Region's area.

Developed agricultural and industrial production is characteristic for the Středočeský Region. Agricultural production profits from excellent natural conditions in the northeastern part of the Region. The Region is

great at crop production, growing of wheat, barley, beet, and in parts close to towns also in growing of fruits, vegetables and flowers.

The following belong to the key industries in the Region: engineering, chemical industry and food industry. ŠKODA AUTO, JSC Mladá Boleslav (automobile factory) is an enterprise of a national importance, manufacture of small cars in TPCA Czech, Ltd. Kolín carries on. There are also several important enterprises from the following industries: glass industry, ceramics manufacture and printing industry. Traditional industrial branches undergo a recession – it applies to coal mining, steel industry and leather manufacture.

Since the beginning of 1990s, the number of the employed in the primary (agriculture, forestry, and fishing) as well as secondary (industry and construction) sector is decreasing. In 2007 and 2008 the employment in the area of industry and construction strengthened, however, economic problems in the following years caused it has been dropping again. In the long-term, the employment in the area of services (tertiary) is increasing; more than six of ten of the employed in the region are working there, which is above the nationwide average.

The unemployment rate is lower than the national average for a long-term. There are distinctive differences in unemployment within the Region, again because of the influence of the short distance from Prague. As at 31 December 2011, the registered unemployment rate in the Region was 7.07 %. The highest rate was reported for the Příbram District (10.10 %) and the lowest for the Praha-východ District (3.35 %).

Gross domestic product per capita in the Středočeský Region in 2010 was 89.9 % of the average level of GDP per capita of the Czech Republic, which ranked the Region 3rd within all the regions of the CR. It is – besides the results of car industry - markedly influenced by the strategically favourable position of the Region, i.e. the fact that it is surrounding the CR's capital.

On the territory of the Středočeský Region, there are many important and historically valuable sights and several Protected Landscape Regions. The biggest concentration of historical buildings and monuments is in the town of Kutná Hora, (Cathedral of St Barbara, Italian Court, Hrádek Museum of Silver & Medieval Mining, Ossuary), which was added to Unesco's World Heritage List. On the Czech list of urban conservation areas of Central Bohemia there is (besides Kutná Hora) only Kolín. The most famous castles are Karlštejn and Točnick in Beroun area, Křivoklát in Rakovník area, Český Šternberk in Benešov area, and Kokořín in Mělník area. The most important chateaux are Konopiště in Benešov area, Žleby and Kačina in Kutná Hora area, Lány in Rakovník area, Nelahozeves or Mělník's castle. The most interesting castle ruins are Žebrák in Beroun area and Okoř in the Praha-západ District.

The most valuable natural area of the Region is the Křivoklát Protected Landscape Region, which is a Unesco "biosphere preservation" area; among other important areas are the Kokořín Protected Landscape Region, Český kras (the Bohemian Karst), Český ráj (the Bohemian Paradise) and Blaník.