

CHARACTERISTIC OF THE REGION

The Jihočeský Region has been viewed in the long term generally as an agricultural area with developed forestry and fish farming in ponds. Manufacturing took roots no earlier than during the last century. Geographically, the Region is a relatively integral whole, the centre of which is formed by the South Bohemian valley. It is surrounded by the Šumava mountains in the south-west, Brdy foothills in the north-west, Středočeská žulová vrchovina (the Central Bohemian Granite Highlands) in the north, Českomoravská vrchovina (the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands) in the east, and Novohradské hory (the Novohradské Mountains) in the south-east. There are two basins stretching in the South Bohemian valley: Českobudějovická and Třeboňská.

Major part of the Region's borderline is formed by the border with Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany (323 km in total). The Region also adjoins the Plzeňský, Středočeský, Vysočina and Jihomoravský Regions. Its position along the border creates favourable conditions for effective cross-border co-operation in the field of manufacturing, services as well as tourism where there is utilised the overall attractiveness of the Region that can offer unspoilt countryside and many national heritage buildings and monuments.

The Region's area is 10,057 km², which makes up 12.8% of the CR's area. Forest land covers more than one third of the Region, while water surface areas 4%. Major part of the area is situated at the altitude of 400-600 m, which implies rather severe climatic conditions. The highest point of the Region is the Šumava peak Plechý (1,378 m), while the lowest point (330 m) is the water surface of Orlická přehrada (the Orlík Reservoir) situated in the Písek District.

The area of the Region falls under the basin of upper and middle sections of the Vltava River with several tributaries: the Malše, Lužnice, Otava Rivers and many others. In the past, more than 7,000 fish ponds were constructed there the total area of which currently covers more than 30,000 hectares. The following fish ponds rank among the largest in the Region as well as in the CR: Rožmberk (490 ha), Bezdrev (450 ha) and Horusický rybník (415 ha). In addition to those, large waterworks were erected: Lipno the largest water surface area in the CR with 4,870 ha, Orlík surrounded by large holiday areas and Římov supplying drinking water to a major part of the Region. Also, the reservoir Hněvkovice was built in connection with the construction of the nuclear power plant Temelín.

The Jihočeský Region is rich in neither raw nor energy producing materials. However, there are important natural resources of different kind in the Region - vast forests of Šumava and Novohradské hory, chiefly coniferous consisting of spruce and pine trees. The biggest raw material resources include deposits of sands and gravel sands, brick clay, aggregates and glass sands. Other important resources include peat, and in some areas limestone, kieselguhr and graphite.

Regarding the environment, the Region suffers from rather low environmental damage. Although the level of emissions is gradually decreasing, there are still a number of polluters, particularly in agriculture and industry. Forest health has been getting worse. Three quarters of coniferous trees older than 60 years received medium or major damage. In the last years forests are exposed especially to unfavourable impact of extreme conditions ((for example an intense drought) and insect pests.

The area of the Region has always had a recreational rather than developed industrial character. The commitment to maintain the natural environment has manifested itself in the establishment of the National Park Šumava (comprising the area 690 km², of which 343 km² belong to the Jihočeský Region), protected landscape areas Šumava (994 km², of which 733 km² are spreading in the Jihočeský Region), Třeboňsko (700 km²) and Blanský les (Blanský Forest - 212 km²). Nearly 300 small protected areas and a number of protected nature formations are to be seen there as well. As a whole is protected about 20 percent of the Region's area.

Historical centres of the following towns have been designated urban conservation areas: České Budějovice, Český Krumlov (inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List), Jindřichův Hradec, Prachatice, Slavonice, Tábor and Třeboň. In addition, a number of historic buildings and monuments can be found in the Region, such as the castles Český Krumlov and Jindřichův Hradec, the chateaux Hluboká nad Vltavou, Orlík, Blatná, Červená Lhota and castles Zvíkov and Landštejn. What is also an important part of the national heritage is the folk architecture in the Region - particularly the style known as "folk baroque", an outstanding example of which is the village of Holašovice (the České Budějovice District) inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1998.

As at 1 January 2003, 17 administrative districts of municipalities with extended competence and 37 administrative districts of municipalities with commissioned local authority were established in the Region. Commissioned local authorities administer municipalities on the territory, which, as at 1 January 2007, fully makes up districts and administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers.

The Jihočeský Region has the lowest density of population in the CR. In the end of 2009, more than 637,600 inhabitants lived in the Region, which accounts for 63 inhabitants per km². The highest density of population of the Region's seven Districts is in the České Budějovice District with practically 30 % of the inhabitants living in this District. This fact is accounted for chiefly by the town of České Budějovice itself with almost 94,900 permanent residents. Other major towns include Tábor (35,500 inhabitants), Písek (29,900), Strakonice (23,100) and Jindřichův Hradec (22,500). The population of these five towns makes one third of the Region's inhabitants. On the other hand, the smallest municipalities under 200 inhabitants comprise 38.2% of the total number of municipalities, but only 4.2% of the Region's population. The smallest municipalities both in the Region and within the entire Czech Republic is Vlkov in the České Budějovice District (18 permanent residents). Currently, there are 623 self-governing municipalities in the Region (with 53 of them enjoying the status of town), with nearly 2,000 settlements. As at 31 December 2009, the share of urban population reached 64.5%.

When compared to the national average, the Region's population is similar (average age 40.7). The Český Krumlov District, which stretch along the border and whose ethnic composition is rather varied, differ from the Region's overall demographic structure in a degree. This District have younger population, the highest birth rates and almost the lowest death rates. The Český Krumlov District with the České Budějovice District has been reported steady growth of population while the population of the other District has been diminishing in numer.

The Region's gross domestic product accounts for only 5.2% of the CR's GDP, but when converted to GDP per inhabitant it amounts to 86.2% of the national average and ranks fifth in the CR (after the Capital City of Prague and the Jihomoravský, Středočeský and Plzeňský Regions). Gross fixed capital formation in the Region in 2008 amounted to CZK 36.8 bn (4.2% of the CR's total).

Regarding agriculture, crop production focuses on cereals, oleaginous and forage crops, with potatoes production playing a major role, too. Animal production focuses on raising cattle and pigs. In total, the Region produces about 10.5% of the CR's agricultural output. Fish farming in ponds has had a long tradition in the Region. Fish ponds cover a total area of about 25,000 hectares and produce one half of the CR's output of fish. The Region's share in the output of waterfowl (ducks and geese) is also significant. Industrial production is concentrated mainly in the České Budějovice urban agglomeration; rather significant share of industry is also reported for the Tábor and Strakonice Districts. However, the Region does not rank among key industrial areas - its 2009 share in sales of industrial enterprises accounted for 4.2% of the CR's total. Manufacturing (mainly manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers and manufacture of food products) prevails over the other industries. Activities in construction are focusing on new construction, modernisation and reconstruction in the Region, accounting for 4.7% of the CR's total construction output.

According to labour force sample surveys there is more than 300,000 employees in the Region, one third of which accounts for industry sector, 12% for trade and repair of personal and household goods and 10% for construction. The 2009 average gross wage amounted to CZK 20,472 (per person - full time equivalent, incl. enterprises with less than 20 employees), falling, though, by CZK 3,016 below the national average - this fact is to a certain degree accounted for by the Region's structure of economy.

There were 27,530 job applicants in the Region at the end of 2009. Registered unemployment rate stood at 7.78% at the end of December 2009, ranking the Jihočeský Region third best after the Capital City of Prague and the Středočeský Regions.

In the statistical Business Register almost 152,000 enterprises, organisations and entrepreneurs were registered in the end of 2009. The biggest part comprised of entrepreneurs - Natural persons in business under the Trade Licensing Act (more than 110,200 entities).

The Region's economy could not develop without dwelling possibilities. According to the Population and Housing Census, as at 1 March 2001 almost 148,000 houses were in the Region, from which 111,500 houses were permanently occupied. There were 279,900 flats out of which 231,300 flats were permanently occupied. Out of the total number of permanently occupied flats, 40% were in own houses, 25.3% were let, 14.9% were co-operative and 8.6% privately owned flats. In 2009, 2,149 new dwellings were completed and more than 1,900 dwellings started.

The Region has been reporting an ever-increasing volume of traffic, particularly on the road. Although there are no major railway corridors running through the Region's area, several important railway junctions can be found there. One of places of interest in the Region is the remainder of the horse railway track that linked the town of České Budějovice with Linz in the Upper Austria and was the first on the European continent. One can also find here the railway stop at the highest altitude in the CR - Kubova Huť, and the narrow-gauge railway from the town of Jindřichův Hradec to Obrataň and Nová Bystřice. The road network, though adequately ensuring the basic transport accessibility, does not currently include any highways. The number of post offices amounts about 220, i.e. nearly a third share of the municipalities have their own post office.

The network of educational establishments comprises 294 nursery schools, 254 basic schools and 97 secondary schools, including 26 grammar schools. University education can be obtained at some of public universities - in the town of České Budějovice where is the seat of the University of South Bohemia with 8 faculties (Faculty of Economics, of Philosophy, Pedagogical, of Science, of Theology, of Health and Social Studies, of Agriculture, of Fisheries and Protection of Waters) or Institute of Technology and Business, or in the town of Jindřichův Hradec, which hosts the Management Faculty of the University of Economics, Prague. Besides, there are also 3 private colleges, namely the College of European and Regional Studies or College of Applied Economic Studies in České Budějovice or the Film Academy of Miroslav Ondříček in Písek. Almost 16,000 students are receiving their university education in the Region.

Major health care establishments include 9 hospitals (with 3,500 beds), six specialised therapeutic institutions and four therapeutic institutions for long-term patients. Outpatient care is provided by nearly 400 surgeries of GP's for adult patients, 210 surgeries of GP's for children and more than 360 surgeries of dentists. Social care establishments dispose of almost 4,700 beds.

Cultural establishments can be found mainly in towns, especially in District Authorities towns. The best-known cultural establishments include Jihočeské divadlo (the South-Bohemian Theatre), Alšova jihočeská galerie (the South-Bohemian Gallery of Mikoláš Aleš), the open-air theatre with revolving auditorium in Český Krumlov and many other establishments. According date of year 2006 there are 14 theatres, 82 museums, 54 permanent cinemas, 119 galleries and exhibition halls, 649 public libraries and a number of other similar establishments in the Region.

Regarding sports, 65 open-air and indoor stadiums can be found in the Region, along with 362 gymnasiums and more than 930 sports grounds. Moreover, there are available 13 indoor swimming pools, 132 open-air swimming pools, 17 winter stadiums (both open-air and indoor), and 405 other sports facilities. (These data were last collected in 2006.)

The countryside of the Region - with its large forest coverage, water surface areas and a great number of national monuments (nearly 6,000) - is the place of leisure and recreation activities for people from all the CR as well as many foreigners. In summer time, this particularly applies not only to the areas surrounding the Lipno and Orlik reservoirs and the south-Bohemian fish ponds, but also the Šumava mountains, whose winter sports centres Zadov - Churáňov and Lipno - Kramolín attract visitors in winter time. In 2009, the 974 statistically monitored collective accommodation establishments reported more than 917,000 guests, including almost third of foreigners, above all coming from the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and the Austria in particular. The average length of stay per guest was 3.3 days. However, many foreigners cross the border to make just a one-day visit mainly to the nearby towns and it is not yet possible to monitor such visits statistically.

Exhibitions of various kinds take place at the České Budějovice Exhibition Grounds throughout the year. The most important are the international agricultural exhibition "Země živitelka" and the exhibition "HOBBY". The Grounds report about 300,000 visitors a year.

During the last few years, many forms of cross-border co-operation have been developing. One of them is Šumava/Bayerischer Wald/Mühlviertel Euroregion, which comprises the territory with total area of 16,000 km² with 1.3 mil inhabitants. It associates 111 Austrian, 107 Bavarian and 128 Czech municipalities (of which 89 municipalities are from the Jihočeský Region). Contributions of it lie in creation and realisation of common projects, especially in the field of transport, services and tourism, and mutual exchange of experience. In May 2002, the foundation charter of another Euroregion was signed; its name is "Silva Nortica" and it covers the territory of the Jindřichův Hradec District, the České Budějovice District, the Písek District and the Tábor District. In the Lower Austria it applies to the following districts: Zwettl, Krems, Gmünd, Waidhofen an der Thaya and Horn. The Euroregion spreads on the territory of 10,639 square kilometres with almost 0.7 million inhabitants. The target of the cross-border co-operation is common presentation of the region, exchange of information, development of tourism, etc. On the South-Bohemian side almost 40 municipalities with more than 260,000 inhabitants participate in it.