

CHARACTERISTICS 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: Českokbudějovická 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 10,056 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 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. In the last years forests are exposed especially to unfavourable impact of extreme conditions (for example an intense drought) and insect pests. Forest health has been getting better.

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 2011, more than 636,100 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 93,600 permanent residents. Other major towns include Tábor (35,100 inhabitants), Písek (29,700), Strakonice (23,000) and Jindřichův Hradec (21,900). The population of these five towns makes nearly one third of the Region's inhabitants. On the other hand, the smallest municipalities under 200 inhabitants comprise 37.0% of the total number of municipalities, but only 4.0% of the Region's population. The smallest municipalities in the Region are Kuřimany in the Strakonice District (26 permanent residents, the fourth smallest municipality in the CR) and Vlkov in the České Budějovice District (27 permanent residents, the fifth smallest in the CR). Currently, there are 623 self-governing municipalities in the Region (with 54 of them enjoying the status of town), with nearly 2,000 settlements. As at 31 December 2011, the share of urban population reached 64.2%.

When compared to the national average, the Region's population is similar (average age of the Region's population is 41.2, the national average is 41,1). 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, almost the highest birth rates and the lowest death rates. The České Budějovice, Písek and Tábor District and also the Český Krumlov District (with the exception of the year 2011) have been reported steady growth of population the last six year, while the population of the other District has been diminishing in numer.

According to the results of the Population and Housing Census, as at 26 March 2011 the share of inhabitants with university education reached 11.1% of total number of persons over 15 years old (in 2001 it was 7.8%) and stake of persons with full secondary education (including professional) was 31,5% (in 2001 it was 28.4%). A higher share of persons with university education in the Czech Republic is in the Capital City of Prague, the Jihomoravský, Olomoucký, Zlínský, Moravskoslezský and Středočeský Regions. Higher shares of persons with full secondary education were reported only in the Capital City of Prague, the Středočeský and Královéhradecký Region. In the Census, 20.7% of inhabitants declared they were believers (national average is 20,6 %), when almost half of population not filed it).

The Region's gross domestic product accounts for only 5.1% of the CR's GDP, but when converted to GDP per inhabitant it amounts to 84.4% of the national average and ranks eighth in the CR (after the Capital City of Prague and after other six Regions: Jihomoravský, Plzeňský, Středočeský, Moravskoslezský, Královéhradecký and Zlínský). Gross fixed capital formation in the Region in 2010 amounted to CZK 50.1 bn (5.4% 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 10–11% 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 2011 share in sales of industrial enterprises accounted for 3.9% 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 civil engineering works in the Region, accounting for 6.1% of the CR's total construction output.

According to labour force sample surveys there is more than 300,000 employees in the Region, 31% of which accounts for industry sector, 13% for trade and repair of personal and household goods and 10% for construction. The 2010 average gross wage amounted to CZK 20,600 (per person - headcount, incl. enterprises with less than 20 employees), falling, though, by 11% below the national average - this fact is to a certain degree accounted for by the Region's structure of economy.

There were 26,450 job applicants in the Region at the end of 2011. Registered unemployment rate stood at 7.53% at the end of December 2011, ranking the Jihočeský Region fifth best after the Capital City of Prague, the Plzeňský, Středočeský and Královéhradecký Regions.

In the statistical Business Register almost 159,000 enterprises, organisations and entrepreneurs were registered in the end of 2011. The biggest part comprised of entrepreneurs - Natural persons in business under the Trade Licensing Act (almost 114,000 entities).

The Region's economy could not develop without dwelling possibilities. According to the Population and Housing Census, as at 26 March 2011 almost 164,000 houses were in the Region, from which 75% houses were occupied. There were about 248,000 flats were occupied. In 2011, 2,028 new dwellings were completed and almost 2,200 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. Nearly a third share of the municipalities have their own post office.

The network of educational establishments comprises 298 nursery schools, 255 basic schools and 96 secondary schools, including 25 grammar schools. Higher 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 2 private colleges, namely the College of European and Regional Studies or the Film Academy of Miroslav Ondříček in Písek. 18,000 students are receiving their university education in the Region.

Major health care establishments include 9 hospitals (with 3,400 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, more than 200 surgeries of GP's for children and almost 370 surgeries of dentists. Social care establishments dispose of almost 5,100 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. There are 58 permanent cinemas and 655 public libraries (incl. Branches) and a number of other similar establishments in the Region.

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 2011, the 982 statistically monitored collective accommodation establishments reported more than 915,000 guests, including almost 31 % of foreigners, above all coming from the Federal Republic of Germany, the Austria and the Netherlands in particular. The average length of stay per guest was 3.1 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 about 120 Austrian, 114 Bavarian and 94 Czech municipalities (of which 55 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 41 municipalities with 264,000 inhabitants participate in it.