

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION

The Středočeský Region lies in the centre of Bohemia. Its area, number of municipalities, and population make it the largest region of the Czech Republic. The Region's area (10,929 km² as at 31 December 2016) covered almost 14% of the CR's area and was 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 the east are flat, highlands prevail in the south and the southwest. The highest point of the territory is the peak called Tok (altitude 865 m) in the Brdy Mountains in the Příbram District; the lowest point is the riverbed of the Labe River (altitude 153 m) in the Mělník District.

The Region divides into 12 districts with 10 district authority municipalities. By area, the largest is the Příbram District (14.3% of the Region's area); the smallest is the Praha-západ District (5.3% of the Region's area). 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 authorised municipal authority of the 2nd level and administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers of the 3rd level were established. In the Středočeský Region, there are 26 administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers, which differ a lot as for their size. The largest as for its area is the Rakovník administrative district (8.2% of the Region's area), while the smallest is the Neratovice administrative district (1.0%).

In 2016, there were 1 144 municipalities in the Region. The highest number of municipalities is concentrated in the Mladá Boleslav District and in the Příbram District (120 municipalities each), while the lowest number of municipalities is in the Mělník District (69). As for administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers it is the Mladá Boleslav administrative district, which dominates as it comprises 98 municipalities; on the contrary, the Lysá nad Labem administrative district consists of 9 municipalities only. The Region is characteristic with a high representation of municipalities with the population up to two thousand (1 033 municipalities); 40.9% of the population live in these municipalities. 84 municipalities received the status of a town, Kladno and Mladá Boleslav are also statutory towns. The share of urban population in the total population of the Region was 52.4%; it was the lowest in the whole Czech Republic. The five largest towns in the Region include Kladno, Mladá Boleslav, Příbram, Kolín and Kutná Hora. The Středočeský Region as the only region has no regional authority town, the regional authority thus seats in the Capital City of Prague.

With its population of 1,338,982 inhabitants as at 31 December 2016 the Region became the most populous region in the Czech Republic. The most populated district of the Středočeský Region was the Praha-východ District (171,914 inhabitants); over 100,000 inhabitants lived also in the Kladno 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 55,309 inhabitants. The population density was the highest in the Praha-západ District, the Praha-východ District, and the Kladno 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 population density was reported in the Rakovník District, and the Benešov District, where it did 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 twentieth 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 41 years in 2016. Nevertheless, a nationwide trend of the population ageing affected the Region and from 2015 persons aged 65+ years started to prevail in their number over children aged up to 14 years.

What significantly influences its economic characteristic is the Region's location. Close ties with the Capital City and dense transportation network make the location 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 Prague with 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 (car manufacturer) 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 manufacturing industry.

Economic activity and employment of the population, their average wages, and income of households of the Středočeský Region increase over a long period and within the Czech Republic they rank the second highest (with the Hl. m. Praha Region, i.e. the City of Prague, ranking first). 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 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 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 2016, the share of the unemployed persons in the Region was 4.3%. The highest rate was reported for the Přeboram District (6.3%) and the lowest for the Praha-východ District (1.8%), which was also the lowest share of the unemployed among districts of the Czech Republic.

The gross domestic product per capita in the Středočeský Region in 2016 was 91.7% of the average level of the GDP per capita of the Czech Republic, which ranked the Region 4th within all the regions of the CR. It is – besides the results of car industry - markedly influenced by the strategically favourable location 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 valuable historical sights and several protected landscape areas. The biggest concentration of historical buildings and monuments is in the town of Kutná Hora (Cathedral of St Barbara, Italian Court, Hrádek – Czech Museum of Silver and medieval silver mine, Ossuary, and Cathedral of the Assumption of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist in Sedlec), which was added to Unesco's World Heritage List. This list contains together with the City of Prague also a chateau and park in Průhonice, which belongs to the largest parks in the CR and it is one of the most frequently visited places in the neighbourhood of Prague. The Czech list of urban conservation areas of the Central Bohemia contains besides the town of Kutná Hora only the town of Kolín; there are 34 urban conservation zones in the Region and 29 national cultural monuments. 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 interesting castle ruins are Žebrák in Beroun area and Okoř in the Praha-západ District. The most important chateaux are Konopiště in Benešov area, Žleby and Kačina in Kutná Hora area, Loučeň in Nymburk area, Lány in Rakovník area, castles Mělník and Nelahozeves in Mělník area. One of the most important places of pilgrimage in Bohemia is Svatá Hora in the town of Přeboram. Among the most frequently visited museums in the Region are: ŠKODA Museum in Mladá Boleslav, Mining Museum in Přeboram, and Czech Museum of Silver in Kutná Hora; among monuments it is Lidice Memorial near the town of Kladno.

The most valuable natural area of the Region is the Křivoklátsko protected landscape area, which is one of Biosphere Reserves of UNESCO; among other important areas are Český kras (the Bohemian Karst) protected landscape area, Český ráj (the Bohemian Paradise), Blaník and Kokořínsko (the area of a Czech well-known poet Karel Hynek Mácha). As at 1 January 2016, a new protected landscape area of Brdy was established on the territory of an abolished Brdy military district. The territory of the former Brdy military district was re-allocated to adjacent municipalities of the Středočeský Region and the Plzeňský Region; thus, the total area of the Středočeský Region decreased by 87.9 km² less compared to the status as at the end of the year 2015.