

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 started to develop there 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 (334 km in total). The Region also adjoins the Plzeňský Region, the Středočeský Region, the Vysočina Region, and the Jihomoravský Region. Its position along the border creates favourable conditions for effective cross-border cooperation in the field of manufacturing, as well as in the area of services related to the development of tourism, in which the overall attractiveness of the Region that can offer less spoilt countryside and many national heritage buildings and monuments is utilised.

The Region's area is 10 058 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 cover 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 (altitude of 1 378 m), while the lowest point (altitude of 330 m) is the water surface of the Orlík Reservoir situated in the Písek District.

The area of the Region falls under the river basin of upper and middle sections of the Vltava River with several tributaries: the Malše River, the Lužnice River, the Otava River, 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), Horusický rybník (415 ha), and Bezdrev. 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 Hněvkovice reservoir was built in connection with the construction of the Temelín nuclear power plant.

The Jihočeský Region is not rich in raw materials; especially, there are almost no sources of fuel 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 many polluters, particularly in agriculture and industry. In the past few years, forests have been 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 of 686 km², of which 341 km² belong to the Jihočeský Region), protected landscape areas Šumava (994 km², of which 733 km² are spreading in the Jihočeský Region), Třeboňsko (687 km²), and Blanský les (220 km²). There are 332 small-size protected areas and protected nature formations in the Region. In total, 20% of the Region's area is protected.

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 castles and chateaux in Český Krumlov and Jindřichův Hradec, the chateaux of Hluboká nad Vltavou, Orlík, Blatná, Červená Lhota, and Zvíkov and Landštejn castles. 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 (in 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 powers and 37 administrative districts of municipalities with authorised municipal authority were established in the Region. Authorised municipal authorities administer municipalities on the territory, which (from 1 January 2007) fully makes up districts and administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers.

The Jihočeský Region is a region with the lowest population density in the entire CR. In the end of 2017, the Region's population was 640.2 thousand, i. e. less than 64 inhabitants per km². The highest population density

of the Region's seven Districts is in the České Budějovice District, in which 30% of the Region's population live. It is mainly because of the concentration in the town of České Budějovice itself, in which over 93.9 thousand people live. Other major towns include Tábor (34.5 thousand inhabitants), Písek (30.1 thousand), Strakonice (22.9 thousand), and Jindřichův Hradec (21.5 thousand). Almost 32% of the Region's population live in those five towns. On the other hand, the smallest municipalities with less than 200 inhabitants comprise 37.0% of the total number of municipalities; however, only 4.1% of the Region's population live there. The smallest municipality in the Region is Hájek in the Strakonice District (33 permanent residents, the ninth smallest municipality in the CR).

As at 1 January 2016, within optimisation of military districts, local changes were made during which a new municipality Polná na Šumavě was separated from the territory of the Boletice military district and other parts of the military district territory were added to other municipalities in the Český Krumlov District and in the Prachatice District. The territory of the military district was reduced by a fourth and now it has no permanent residents at all. Besides this military district, the Region comprises now 623 self-governing municipalities (56 of them with the status of town) with almost 2 000 municipality parts. As at 31 December 2017, the share of urban population reached 64.1%.

The Region's population is a bit older compared to the entire Czech Republic; the average age in the Region is 42.5 years (the national average is 42.2 years). The Český Krumlov District, which stretches along the border and an ethnic composition of which is rather varied, markedly differs from the Region's overall demographic structure with its younger population. There is usually the highest birth rate (the same as in the České Budějovice District) and the lowest death rate in the Region. The České Budějovice District and thanks to migration also the Písek District (with the exception of the year 2013) have been reporting steady growth of the population, while the population of other districts has been rather decreasing over the last few years.

According to labour force sample surveys, the share of population with higher education reached 15.5% of the total number of persons aged 15+ years in 2017, which is less compared to the figure for the entire Czech Republic. The Region has a higher share of persons with secondary education with A-level examination (including post-secondary) and also a higher share of secondary school graduates without A-level examination. They account for 35.1% and 35.7%, respectively, of the population aged 15+ years in the Region.

In 2017, the Region contributed with 4.9% to the gross domestic product formation of the Czech Republic; when converted to the GDP per capita it amounted to 81.2% of the national average and the Region ranked tenth in the CR. The gross fixed capital formation in the Region in 2016 amounted to CZK 54.5 bn (4.6% of the CR's total).

Regarding agriculture, crop production focuses on cereals, oleaginous and fodder crops, with potatoes production playing a major role, too. Animal production focuses on raising cattle and pigs. In total, the Region produces about 10% 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 a 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. However, the Region does not rank among key industrial areas – its 2017 share in sales of industrial enterprises was 4.6% of the CR's total. Manufacturing (mainly manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers) prevails over the other industries. Construction enterprises contributed 8.2% to the construction output of the CR; they were focusing mainly on civil engineering works.

According to labour force sample surveys there are 314.8 thousand employees in the Region, 30.8% of whom were in the industry sector, 11.2% in trade and repair of motor vehicles, and 9.0% in construction. The average gross monthly wage in 2016 amounted to CZK 24 218 per person (headcount), incl. enterprises with less than 20 employees, which was, however, by 9.8% below the national average (it is partially caused by the Region's economy structure).

There were 14 112 job applicants registered in the Region at the end of 2017. The share of the unemployed persons reached 3.09% as at 31 December 2017, ranking the Jihočeský Region fifth best after the Capital City of Prague, the Plzeňský Region, the Královéhradecký Region, and the Pardubický Region.

In the statistical Business Register almost 165 000 enterprises, organisations, and entrepreneurs were registered in the end of 2017. The biggest part comprised of private entrepreneurs in business under the Trade Act (116 000 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, of which 75% houses were occupied. There were about 248 000 occupied dwellings. In 2011–2017, 10.4 thousand new dwellings were completed.

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 ensures sufficiently basic transport accessibility of municipalities; however, the Region's territory is not connected now to the network of highways within the CR. Postal services are provided by more than 230 post offices. Approximately a third of the municipalities have their own post office.

The network of educational establishments comprises 319 nursery schools, 260 basic schools, and 89 secondary schools, including 23 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, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Theology, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Faculty of Agriculture, and Faculty of Fisheries and Protection of Waters) or the Institute of Technology and Business, or in the town of Jindřichův Hradec, which hosts the Faculty of Management of the University of Economics, Prague. Besides that, there are also 2 private universities, namely the College of European and Regional Studies or the Film Academy of Miroslav Ondříček in Písek. 14.4 thousand students study at universities in the Region.

Major health care establishments include 9 hospitals (with 3.4 thousand beds) and 7 specialised therapeutic institutions. Outpatient care is provided by 386 surgeries of general practitioners (GPs) for adults, 176 surgeries of GPs for children, and 365 surgeries of dentists (data for the year 2016). Retirement homes and special care homes have 3.8 thousand 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. Cinemas are in 46 municipalities and towns (the piece of data is for the year 2016). There are 637 public libraries (incl. branches) and many other establishments in the entire 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, this particularly applies not only to the areas surrounding the Lipno reservoir, the Orlík reservoir, and the south-Bohemian fish ponds, but also to the Šumava mountains, ski resorts of which (Zadov-Churáňov and Lipno-Kramolín) attract visitors in winter. In 2017, the 1 136 statistically surveyed collective accommodation establishments reported almost 1.5 million guests, of whom 34% were foreigners coming mainly from China, the Federal Republic of Germany, Taiwan (Province of China), the Republic of Korea, and Austria. The average length of stay per foreign guest was 2.8 days. However, many foreign tourists cross the border to make just a one-day visit mainly to the near 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 250 000 visitors a year.

During the last few years, many forms of cross-border cooperation have been developing. One of them is Šumava/Bayerischer Wald/Mühlviertel Euroregion, which comprises a territory with the total area of 16 000 km² with 1.3 mil inhabitants. It associates about 104 Austrian, 117 Bavarian, and 90 Czech municipalities (of which 51 municipalities with 69 000 inhabitants are from the Jihočeský Region). Contributions of it lie in creation and implementation of common projects, especially in the field of transport, services, 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 cooperation is common presentation of the region, exchange of information, development of tourism, and the like. On the South-Bohemian side, 37 municipalities with almost 260 000 inhabitants participate in it. In June 2012, the European Region "Dunaj-Vltava" was established in Linz, Austria. It includes territories in 3 countries with the area of 60 000 km² and 6 mil. inhabitants. As for the Czech Republic, it includes the Jihočeský Region, the Plzeňský Region, and the Vysočina Region.