

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION

The Jihočeský Region has been viewed primarily as an agricultural area with developed fish farming in ponds and forestry for a long period of time. 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: the Českobudějovická Basin and the Třeboňská Basin.

Major part of the borderline of the Jihočeský Region is formed by the state border with Austria and Germany. The Region also adjoins the Plzeňský Region, the Středočeský Region, the Vysočina Region, and the Jihomoravský Region. Its position along the border provides suitable 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.

With its area of 10 058 square kilometres, the Region contributes almost 13% to the total area of the Czech Republic (CR). Forest land covers more than 37% of the Region and about 4% of the Region's area are covered by bodies of water. Major part of the Region is situated at the altitude of 400–600 m, which implies rather severe climatic conditions. The highest point of the Region is the Plechý peak (altitude 1 378 m) in the Šumava Mountains, whereas the lowest point (altitude 330 m) is the water surface of the Orlík Reservoir situated in the Písek District.

The territory of the Region belongs to the basin of upper and middle sections of the Vltava River with its tributaries: the Malše River, the Lužnice River, the Otava River, and many others. In the past, over 7 thousand fish ponds were constructed there; their total area currently covers more than 30 000 hectares. The following fish ponds rank among the largest in the Region as well as in the Czech Republic: Rožmberk, Horusický rybník, and Bezdrev. Besides that, also other large waterworks were built in the territory of the Region: Lipno, which is with its 4 870 hectares the largest water surface area in the Czech Republic, 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 territory of 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 kinds in the Region – vast forests of the Šumava Mountains and the Novohradské hory Mountains; they are mainly coniferous forests 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 also limestone, kieselguhr, and graphite.

Although the environment of the Region within the country can be characterised as “with relatively low environmental damage” and the pollution (the level of emissions) is gradually decreasing, there are still many polluters, especially 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 resulted in the establishment of the Šumava National Park, protected landscape areas of Šumava, Třeboňsko (an area around the town of Třeboň), and Blanský les (Blanský Forest). There are over 300 small-size protected areas and protected nature formations in the Region. In total, almost a fifth of the Region's area is protected.

Historic centres of the following towns have been designated urban conservation areas: České Budějovice, Český Krumlov (inscribed on the UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1992), Jindřichův Hradec, Prachatice, Slavonice, Tábor, and Třeboň. In addition, a number of historic buildings and monuments can be found in the Region. 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's 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 in the territory, which fully makes up Districts and administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers from 1 January 2007.

As at 1 January 2016, within optimisation of military districts, local changes were made during which a new municipality of 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 of the Český Krumlov District and of 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 thousand municipality parts.

The Jihočeský Region is a Region with the lowest population density in the whole Czech Republic. In recent years, it has been fluctuating around 65 people per square kilometre. The highest population density is in the České Budějovice District, in which 30% of the Region's population live. It is mainly because of the concentration in the city of České Budějovice itself. Other major towns include Tábor, Písek, Strakonice, and Jindřichův Hradec. Almost one third of the Region's population lives in those five towns. On the other hand, the smallest municipalities up to 200 population make about 36% of the total number of municipalities; however, approximately 4% of the total Region's population live there.

The Region's population is slightly older compared to the whole Czech Republic. The České Budějovice District and the Český Krumlov District with a rather varied ethnic composition, which usually also have the highest birth rate and the lowest death rate in the Region, markedly differ from the Region's demographic structure by their younger age structure.

The Region contributes about 5% to the gross domestic product (GDP) formation of the Czech Republic and as for the GDP per capita it is constantly below the national average.

Regarding agriculture, crop production focuses on cereals, oil seed crops, and forage plants, with potatoe production playing a major role, too. Animal production focuses on raising cattle and poultry. 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 Czech Republic's output of fish. The Region's contribution to 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 of the Czech Republic. Construction enterprises of the Region are focusing mainly on civil engineering works. In a comparison of Regions as for the volume of construction works, the Jihočeský Region belongs to Regions of a medium importance. However, South Bohemia has crucial importance for the Czech energy sector. Mainly thanks to the Temelín nuclear power plant, the Region ranks second as for power generation; it contributes a fifth to the nationwide total. Cooling towers of the nuclear power plant became a new prominent landmark of the South Bohemian landscape.

The share of the unemployed persons reaches below-average values for a long period, ranking the Jihočeský Region on one of the lowest places in the regional comparison.

In the Statistical Business Register, over 153 thousand enterprises, organisations, and entrepreneurs are registered. The biggest part is comprised of private entrepreneurs in business under the Trade Act.

The Region has been reporting an ever-increasing traffic volume, particularly of the road transport. In railway transport, a gradually modernised fourth transit corridor is running through the Region's area from Germany to Austria (via the towns of Tábor, České Budějovice, and Horní Dvořiště) and other important railway junctions can also be found there. One of places of interest in the Region is the remainder of the horse railway track that linked the city of České Budějovice with Linz in the Upper Austria and was the first one on the European continent. One can also find there a railway stop at the highest altitude in Czechia (Kubova Huť) and a narrow-gauge railway from the town of Jindřichův Hradec to Obrataň and Nová Bystřice. The road network ensures basic transport accessibility of municipalities sufficiently; however, the Region's territory is not connected now to the network of motorways within Czechia.

The network of educational establishments comprises nursery schools, basic schools, and secondary schools, including grammar schools. Higher education can be obtained in the city of České Budějovice at some of faculties of the Jihočeská univerzita (University of South Bohemia) or the Vysoká škola technická a ekonomická (Institute of Technology and Business), and in the town of Jindřichův Hradec, which hosts the Faculty of Management of the Vysoká škola ekonomická Praha (University of Economics, Prague). Besides that, there are also 2 private universities, namely the Vysoká škola evropských a regionálních studií (College of European and Regional Studies) and the Filmová akademie M. Ondříčka (Film Academy of Miroslav Ondříček) in the town of Písek.

Cultural establishments can be found mainly in towns, especially district towns. The best-known cultural establishments include the Jihočeské divadlo (South-Bohemian Theatre), the Alšova jihočeská galerie (South-Bohemian Gallery of Mikoláš Aleš), the open-air theatre with revolving auditorium in the town of Český Krumlov, and other establishments. The countryside of the Region – with its large forest coverage, water surface areas, and a great number of national monuments – is the place of leisure and recreation activities not only for people from the whole CR but also for tourists from abroad. In summer, this particularly applies to the areas surrounding the Lipno reservoir, the Orlik reservoir, south-Bohemian fish ponds, and the Šumava Mountains, whereas in winter visitors come to ski resorts of Zadov-Churáňov and Lipno-Kramolín.

Exhibitions of various kinds take place at the České Budějovice Exhibition Grounds throughout the year. The most important are: the international agricultural exhibition called Země živitelka and the "HOBBY" exhibition.

Over the last years, many forms of cross-border cooperation have been developing. One of them is the Šumava/Bayerischer Wald/Mühlviertel Euroregion, which comprises a territory with the total area of over 16 thousand square kilometres with almost 1.3 million population from Upper Austria, Bavaria, the Jihočeský Region, and the Plzeňský Region. Contributions of it lie in creation and implementation of joint projects, especially in the field of transport, services, and tourism and in mutual exchange of experience. In May 2002, the foundation charter of another Euroregion was signed; its name is "Silva Nortica" and it comprises 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 over the territory of over 10 thousand square kilometres with almost 0.7 million population. The cross-border cooperation is aimed at common presentation of the region, exchange of information, development of tourism, and the like. In June 2012, the Danube-Vltava European Region was established in Linz, Austria. It includes territories in 3 countries with the area of 60 thousand square kilometres and 6 million population. In the Czech Republic, it includes the Jihočeský Region, the Plzeňský Region, and the Vysočina Region.

