

CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CAPITAL CITY OF PRAGUE

Prague (Praha) is the Capital City of the Czech Republic. It is a natural centre of politics, international relations, education, culture and economy. The Capital City of Prague ranks among important and developed regions even within the entire EU. Since 1992, its historical centre has been on Unesco's World Heritage List. All these aspects are reflected in the specific character and position of Prague among the regions of the CR.

Pursuant to the Act of the Czech National Council on the Capital City of Prague, the city is a **statutory town**. It is administered by the bodies of the Capital City: the Assembly of the City of Prague, the Council of the City of Prague and the Prague City Hall. For execution of the state administration, from 2001, Prague is divided to 22 administrative districts, from the point of view of self-government it consists of 57 autonomous city sections with own elected bodies. These city sections are significantly different. There are city sections of distinct character of urban centre, city sections of prevalent residential area with houses dating back to the 1920's and 1930's, city sections of chiefly industrial nature, neighbourhoods of high-rise houses, and suburban areas. They differ in the level of urbanisation, population density, quality of technical infrastructure and socio-economic conditions of life of their inhabitants. As for the number of inhabitants these city sections are also very different. While population of four city sections account for more than 100,000 each (Prague 4, Prague 10, Prague 8 and Prague 6), eleven city sections comprise less than 2,000 inhabitants each, of which two have less than 500 inhabitants each (Prague-Nedvězí, Prague-Královice).

The Capital City of Prague is the largest city of the Czech Republic. Its area is 496 km², which is only 0.6 % of the CR's territory, but with **the population of 1,257,158 inhabitants as at 31 December 2010** it represents 12 % of the total population of the CR. Prague then markedly dominates the population structure in the Czech Republic as its second largest city, Brno, makes one third of the Prague's population.

The current area of the city is a result of natural historical development and a long-term **territorial growth**. The beginnings of Prague could be put in the second half of the 9th century when the Prague Castle was founded and independent settlements began to develop under its protection in the surrounding area. These settlements grew to constituent independent towns of Prague: Staré Město (the Old Town), Malá Strana (the Lesser or Little Quarter), Nové Město (the New Town), and Hradčany (the castle district). Milestones in the development of Prague so far include the year of 1784, during the reign of Joseph II, when the four still independent towns were joined into the town of Prague, then the years of 1850, 1883, 1884 and 1901 when other four towns were attached, respectively Josefov, Vyšehrad, Holešovice-Bubny, Libeň. At the beginning of the 20th century the territory of Prague consisted of only 8 parts with the area of approximately 2 000 hectares which is about 4 % of its present area. **The Act of 6 February 1920** established the **Great Prague** when other 39 nearby municipalities were joined to the existing eight Prague neighbourhoods. **Further territorial growth took place in 1960**, in **1968** (attachment of 21 municipalities of the former Středočeský Region, in **1970** and finally in **1974** when other 30 municipalities of the former Středočeský Region were attached to Prague. There have been no other territorial changes since this year.

Population of Prague had been increasing already from half of the 17th century. It culminated in 1992. When we look at the results of periodic censuses, we can see that Prague's population increased 4.5 times from the first census (1869) to 1991 Census in which the biggest number of Praguers was counted (all that calculated for the same territory). From 1991 to 2001 Census Prague's population decreased for the very first time of censuses taking place. According to the 2001 Population and Housing Census, the number of inhabitants was even lower than the number in 1980. During the last years, Prague's population has been yearly slightly increasing again. In recent years, the increments resulted only from migration, namely persons in productive age, who move to Prague especially due to ample opportunity to find a job on the labour market. Persons with foreign citizenship prevail among them. **In 2006, it was the first time after a longer period when a positive natural increase was noticed (number of live-births was higher than number of deaths)**. The increase came from bigger number of children born to women belonging to the baby boom generation in the 1970's. Since 2006, the number of live-births is always higher than number of deaths and from year to year. Even in 2010, this value has increased (natural increased was 2 526 persons). Natural increases of the population occurred namely in the period of the First Republic (1920-28) in the war and post-war years (1940-56) and in the 70's (1973-79).

The constant slight increase of the average age of population of Prague, which is still higher than in the Czech Republic itself is traditionally characteristic for **population situation** in Prague. In 2010, slightly increasing share of children occurred again. At the same time, an absolute growth of productive population was recorded, but the share of these people in population decreased. Slightly increasing number of up to 5-years-old children in last years is influenced by heightened birth rate. **Index of ageing (127,7) in Prague is constantly highly exceeding average of Czech Republic (107,8)** and contrary to the previous year, this ratio has decreased again. The economic burden index (41,3) is constantly lower than in the Czech Republic in total. Changes in the age structure of the population owe mainly to migration – moving of young families with children to the city suburbs and, in contrast, inflow of people of the productive age to Prague, especially because of their careers. Positive development of natural change had smaller impact on age structure of Prague population.

Considerable mobility of foreign nationals moving for work leads to high gross migration in Prague. Resulting from migration for work is thus both an increase in the number of foreign nationals in Prague's population and also shifts in the population age structure. Permanently increasing is the share of inhabitants in the age of 15-59, who find their job in Prague.

What is a clearly positive feature of demographic development for the last decades is **improving of life expectancy**. Prague's inhabitants live to the oldest age when compared to all regions of the CR. In 2010, the life expectancy at birth increased moderately for women to 81,23 (compared to 80,84 years in 2009) and for men to 76,28 years (compared to 76,25 years in 2009). Women in average live by 5 years longer than men.. High values of life expectancy in Prague are attributed to better availability of medical care, but also to some favourable tendencies in the way of life even despite worse parameters of the environment. Also infant mortality is very low in Prague (2,7 per mille).

As for **economy**, the Capital City of Prague has a unique position within the Czech Republic. It is the economic centre of the state and also a centre for intermediation of impacts of multinational economic relations in the whole state. Apart from all of the main authorities of the state administration most of financial institutions and foreign enterprises are based here. All this has a significant effect on the economy of Prague, whose economic output makes up permanently almost a quarter of the national gross domestic product (GDP). Economy of the region expressed in GDP in current prices recorded even in 2009 a permanent growth (up-to-date data is not available yet). The year-on-year increments since 2001 in Prague stand at the national average even after the accession of the CR to the EU in 2004, which positively affected the economy of the whole country by improving conditions for trade with the EU states. GDP in Prague per capita constantly highly exceeds the CR value (220,4 % to CZ average) and, at the same time, the average for the whole EU (177 % to EU-27 average). **Higher level of GDP production is typical for metropolises**. This is caused by many factors: **higher level of wages, in Prague, lot of non-Prague workers creates an added value, location and registration of headquarters of economic subjects in the city, presence of subsidiaries of multinational companies, concentration of central bodies of public and private sector**. These phenomena are linked with agglomeration effects which lead to cutting company costs as a result of concentration of various economic and supporting activities.

The **situation on the labour market** is also connected with the performance of the economy. **Prague is the largest regional market in the CR**. Characteristic features of existing development are on the one hand high localization attractiveness of Prague's labour market, on the other hand Prague's ability to cover increased demand. This is given by a significant professional mobility of internal sources as well as to date fast growing sources of out-of-Prague and foreign workers. Prague's labour market thanks to a wide offer of professions was able to absorb almost all labour force released in the process of transformation as well as the new coming one. Prague affects also to the rest of the Czech Republic and especially the Středočeský region which is integrated with Prague due to an intensive commuting which lowers the unemployment in the region.

Job positions in the Capital City of Prague are opportunities also for inhabitants from wide surroundings and in fact the whole CR. According to results of the 2001 Population and Housing Census the number of filled job vacancies in Prague represented a fifth of all job vacancies in the CR. Number of jobs as at 1 March 2001 was nearly 726 thousand and active inhabitants of Prague were by 125 thousand less. The importance of commuting has got an exceptional meaning for Prague. Labour force in Prague has significantly higher professional skills compared to other regions. More

than 30 % of employed are persons with a university degree and their number has got lately a regular increasing trend. Also average wages in Prague reach significantly higher values than in the rest of the regions. Another characteristic feature of Prague's labour market is also below the average unemployment. **During the on-going economic crisis the characteristics of Prague's labour market slightly deteriorated**, however, compared to other regions they still show good results. The registered unemployment rate was as at 31 August 2011 4.08 % which is the same value when compared to the corresponding period in 2010. The total number of unemployed remained the same as in previous year.

Basic structural reconstruction was reflected in changes of **branch structure of Prague economy**. Characteristic features of the development of Prague economic basis after 1989 was strengthening of the sphere of services and decrease of share of production industries. Tertiary industries represent now in Prague more than 80% of value added. Also employment rate in this sphere in Prague markedly exceeds data from all the regions. In 2001, 77% of all employed in Prague worked in services and in 2010, it was almost 80 %. On the contrary, the share of **industrial sector** in creation of value added and Prague's employment is much lower than national average. Industry as a branch does not have such an important position in Prague as in other regions of the CR.

In construction the influence of crisis appeared. Although Prague is on the top regarding basic construction output and construction work, 46 % of buildings accounted in Prague is built in other regions (2010). Continuously, less of construction permits has been granted, the number of completed dwellings is decreasing. The volume of construction works in enterprises with more than 20 employees has decreased too. The intensity of dwelling construction is lower than in Central Bohemia region, where the inhabitants of Prague often move.

An important branch for Prague's economy is **tourism**. In 2010, 4,7 millions of guests were accommodated in Prague collective accommodation establishments, which is by 10 % more than in 2009, when year-to-year decrease was recorded. Prague has become a favourite destination of **tourists from abroad, who represent nearly 90% of all accommodated guests**. Most often come clients from the United Kingdom and Germany. Prague is also a common target of domestic business trips and it is an important centre of congress tourism.

As regards collective accommodation establishments, the peak in number of establishments was noticed in 2008. In 2010, there was a moderate decrease of the number of establishments and beds. The most beds in Prague is in 4-star and 3-star hotels, where 63 % of total bed capacity is concentrated. As air transport gets cheaper, there has still been an increasing popularity of weekend tours. Tourist season in Prague is not limited in time, however, preferred are summer months.

As for other parts of social life, Prague has a significant position also in **education, health and culture**. It can be said that it is a national centre of education. Already from the secondary level of education upwards there is an increased concentration of schools. Prague has the highest number of grammar schools and secondary technical schools of all the regions. In university education, Prague's position is absolutely unique. In the school year 2010/2011, there was 32 universities at which 146,5 thousand students were studying in all types of studies. Their number is slightly increasing. During the last few years, existing demographical development has been reflected also in shifts in school establishments. Number of basic schools as well as their pupils is slightly decreasing. Numbers of students at secondary schools are more or less stagnating.

Also health establishments are concentrated on the territory of the City. They are mainly specialized and often also research establishments, which, however, serve to patients from all over the Czech Republic. Almost one fifth of all physicians working in the CR are employed there. **Relative indicators from health grossed up to 1,000 population are permanently the highest of all regions** and are markedly above the national average, because all Prague's health establishments serve also to the surroundings of Prague and some specialized establishments serve the population of the entire CR. While in other regions (after transfer of health establishments to the competence of regions) there are more and more non-state establishments, this does not apply to Prague, in which **almost a half of all physicians work in state health establishments (46 %)**. Statistical data on the number of establishments, beds and workers in health sector cannot show changes of quality in the care. **A long-**

term increase in health care quality is reflected rather in demographic indicators such as life expectancy or deaths by cause of death.

Prague is of extraordinary importance also for culture. Majority of cultural institutions of nationwide importance are placed there as well as a dense network of other cultural facilities.

In accordance with the importance, location and role of Prague, a wide range of **transport links** has developed over time. Mutual regional links with the surrounding Středočeský Region are the closest ones. People are coming to Prague (as it is the capital) from the entire Czech Republic. On the other hand, Prague population goes for recreation not only to its nearest surroundings but also all over the CR. Thanks to its highly central location both within the CR and Europe, Prague is determined to play the role of transport crossroads as well as a target destination of goods and persons movement. Traditionally, Prague is the largest centre of international transport in the country, as well as the largest transport node interconnecting the individual regions of the country.

Prague is a central point of all **highway routes**. Before the split-up of the former Czechoslovakia the first highway D 1 linking Prague, Brno and Bratislava was developed. The construction of the highway D 8 to lead from Prague via Dresden to Berlin is under construction. More and more painful becomes especially absence of alternate routes around Prague and, most of all, around the inner city. Up to now, only partial segments were built out of two rounds planned. Car city ring road Myslbekova – Pelc Tyrolka is now under construction (started in 2007) and should be put into operation in 2015. The south part of Prague ring was finalised in September 2010.

Prague is an important **international railway node**, too. Stress is being put on the development of railway transport on the European basis (e.g. Eurocity trains) along with the current phase-out on the less travelled tracks. What is under preparation is the reconstruction of key railway routes to fit express traffic. The reconstruction will contribute to high comfort of travel on long-distance routes, especially international ones. Trains connecting suburban areas form part of the Prague Integrated Transport. The construction of the “New Connection”, that connected the Hlavní nádraží railway station and Masarykovo nádraží railway station at one side and Libeň, Vysočany and Holešovice railway stations at the other side, has been finished

Air transport of freight as well as passengers is provided particularly by the Prague-Ruzyně airport. In 2010 there were 11,5 millions checked-in, which represents 0.7 % yearly decrease. The new Sever 2 terminal was opened in January 2006 to which all the flights to Schengen countries were transferred. What is important for the Prague airport is the development of long-distance flights, thanks to which the number of passengers who use the Czech capital as a transfer point for flights to distant destinations increases. The Prague airport operates on two tracks. At present, in respect of the airport, the issues of connection to the public city transport as well as the privatisation of the airport are broadly discussed.

Prague has relatively well functioning **public transport** with a backbone system of the metro (almost 60 km long) and networks of tram railways (142 km long). Annually, more than 1 billion passengers use public transport vehicles and 1650 million km are driven. The system of Prague integrated transport (PID) is important for Prague and its surroundings. Now, it is operated up to 35 km far from Prague and thus it includes also an important part of the Středočeský Region (about 229 municipalities). Even though important investments were completed building of transport infrastructure in order to help the city centre suffering from traffic jams remains to be a priority in Prague. The growth of number of cars is not as high as it was in the past, but there is still some. By the end of 2010 649,7 thousand cars were registered.

In spite of marked improvement in the 90's, Prague belongs among the most affected regions of the state from the **quality of the environment** point of view. Air quality in Prague is mostly influenced by transportation and electricity and heat generation. In Prague, the **limit-exceeding concentrations of suspended particulate matter of PM₁₀** (and connected secondary dust generation), **nitrogen oxides and benzo(a)pyren are important**. The most serious of the physical factors having impact on the environment is **noise pollution**.

On the territory of the City of Prague there are 89 special protected areas making up 4.3 % of the area of Prague of which 8 belong to National Nature Monuments (e. g. Barrandovské skály, Lochkovský profil), 15 natural preserves and 66 nature monuments. However, Prague's centre has not much **lawn and planting** (public parks) of good quality. After fortification wall had been demolished (in 1871-1888) the space that was made available has been built up unlike many European cities have done it. Nevertheless, the state of urban and suburban greenery, which used to be previously pretty neglected, has improved recently. Gradual recultivation of particular gardens and parks is in progress.