

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION

The Plzeňský Region is located in the southwest of the Czech Republic (CR), bordering the Federal Republic of Germany (Bavaria) in the west, the Karlovarský Region in the northwest, the Středočeský Region in the northeast, and the Jihočeský Region in the southeast.

The area of 7 649 square kilometres ranks the Region the third largest among Regions of the CR, while as for population it ranks eighth. The Region comprises the following seven Districts: the Domažlice District, the Klatovy District, the Plzeň-město District, the Plzeň-jih District, the Plzeň-sever District, the Rokycany District, and the Tachov District. Their characteristics vary significantly from one District to another in terms of landscape character, population size and structure, economic potential, as well as the size and density of settlements.

There are diverse natural conditions in the Region due to its topography. Geographically, the Region breaks up into several areas as follows: Plzeňská pahorkatina (the Pilsen Uplands), a part of Brdská vrchovina (the Brdy Highlands), Český les (the Bohemian Forest), and a part of Šumava (the Šumava Mountains). Climatic, geological, and hydrological conditions in the respective areas differ to a great degree.

Mineral reserves, which are crucial for the development of manufacturing, are located in the Plzeňský Region particularly in the central parts surrounding the city of Plzeň (Pilsen). It regards resources of bituminous coal, heat-resistant and ceramic clays, and building stone. At the foothills of the Šumava Mountains, there are resources of limestone. The Region has quite favourable conditions as for agriculture. The agricultural land covers 49.2% of the total Region's area, of which arable land makes 65.9%. Forestry is characterised by sufficient natural resources of wood, as forest land covers 40.4% of the total area of the Region (large forests are particularly in Šumava, Český les, and Brdská vrchovina). As for the total volume of coniferous roundwood removals, the Region ranks third within the CR.

The environment of the Region is of good quality when compared to other Regions of the CR. Specific emissions according to REZZO 1–4 in the Region are lower than the national average. In 2023, specific emissions of sulphur dioxide were 0.29 t/km² (i.e. 41.7% of specific emissions in the CR), specific emissions of nitrogen oxides were 0.97 t/km² (i.e. 53.5% of the national level), specific emissions of carbon monoxide were 4.62 t/km² (i.e. 40.5% of the national level), and solid emissions were 0.49 t/km² (i.e. 53.1% of the national level).

The least damaged areas comprise the mountainous parts of Šumava, Český les, western parts of Brdská vrchovina, and the areas surrounding the municipalities of Manětín and Nečtiny. The environment protection in Šumava is ensured by the following organisations: the Šumava National Park and the Šumava Protected Landscape Area. There are 202 specially protected areas of which five protected landscape areas (Šumava, Český les, Slavkovský les, Brdy and Křivoklátsko) in the Region.

The city of Plzeň and its surroundings, where the environment is severely damaged, are an exception. The city of Plzeň and its surroundings suffer the effects of a high concentration of industrial activities and heavy road traffic. The overloaded road network makes the quality of the environment much worse due to emissions of nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons and noise. Mining or quarrying activities devastated the most the areas in the surroundings of the following municipalities: Nýřany, Tlučná, Vejprnice, Břasy, Radnice, Stříbro, and Ejpvovice.

As at 1 January 2024 the road network in the Plzeňský Region consists of 5 142.1 km of roads and motorways, of which 419.2 km are first class roads, 1 494.0 km second class roads, and 3 119.7 km third class roads. The Plzeňský Region has 109.2 km of motorways, most of which are in the Tachov District (44.7 km), the Rokycany District (25.9 km), and the Plzeň-sever District (18.9 km). Length of railways in the Region was 725.3 km as at 31 December 2023.

What is typical for the Plzeňský Region is a high number of small settlements that are scattered about the Region; since medium-sized towns are missing, the structure of centres is atypical in comparison to other parts of the CR. The city of Plzeň with its 185 599 population contrasts with small municipalities, as it is the second most important centre of Bohemia, right behind Prague. The Plzeňský Region comprises 57 towns in which 410 501 people live (66.9% of the Region's total population).

From 1 January 2003, based on the Act No 314/2002 Sb on determination of municipalities with authorised municipal authority and municipalities with extended powers, the Czech Republic has a new administrative structure as follows: it is divided into 205 administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers. The Decree of the Ministry of the Interior No 388/2002 Sb determined

administrative districts of municipalities with authorised municipal authority and administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers. District authorities ceased to exist (as at 31 December 2002) and an important part of their powers was delegated to municipalities with extended powers. The Plzeňský Region was divided into 15 administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers under which 35 administrative districts of municipalities with authorised municipal authority come. The following belong to the municipalities with extended powers: Blovice, Domažlice, Horažďovice, Horšovský Týn, Klatovy, Kralovice, Nepomuk, Nýřany, Plzeň, Přeštice, Rokycany, Stod, Stříbro, Sušice, and Tachov.

Main settlements in the Region lie on development axes of regional importance and on the western radial route, which connects Pilsen and Prague and is directing through a corridor to the border with Germany. Out of these axes, there are sparsely inhabited territories with prevailing residential and agricultural function, with insufficiently developed social and technical infrastructure, and limited transport services. The following will contribute to revitalisation of these settlements: establishment of small businesses, revival of crafts, and development of services related to tourism. Municipalities associate to form microregions in order to enable at least partial implementation of some activities.

In the period from 1990 to 2023, housing construction intensity peaked in 2008. The number of completed dwellings per 1 000 mid-year population was 4.70. In the year 2023, the value of the housing construction intensity amounted to 4.01.

The Plzeňský Region is the eighth Region with its population of 613 374 people in the Czech Republic (as at 31 December 2023), making up 5.6% of the CR's total population. However, the population is distributed very unevenly over the Region, 30.3% of the Region's population live in the city of Plzeň and an additional 24.4% are concentrated in 18 towns with 5 000+ population.

The Plzeňský Region has the third lowest population density in the CR, which amounts to 80.2 people per square kilometre (the population density of the CR is 138.2 people per square kilometre). Within the Region, the lowest density is reported for the Tachov District and the Klatovy District (42.2 and 44.8 people per square kilometre, respectively).

The average age amounted to 43.0 years as at 31 December 2023, which is the eighth highest figure in the CR. As for the average age, the oldest population lived in the Klatovy District (44.4 years), whereas the youngest population (42.0 years) was in the Tachov District.

Only a migration surplus contributed to the population increase in the Czech Republic (CR) and in the Plzeňský Region in 2023; it reached 94 672 population in the CR and 9 155 in the Plzeňský Region. The share of the Plzeňský Region in the migration surplus of the CR made 9.7%. A natural decrease in the CR was -21 646 population and in the Plzeňský Region -1 169.

As for the number of live births (8.1 per 1 000 mid-year population), the figure for the Plzeňský Region was lower when compared to the national average in 2023 (8.4 per 1 000 mid-year population). In relative terms, the highest number of live births was reported by the Rokycany District (8.6).

The number of marriages per 1 000 mid-year population (4.3) in the Plzeňský Region was lower than the national average (4.4). In relative terms, most marriages were concluded in the Domažlice District, Klatovy District and Plzeň-jih District (the same value 4.5). The divorce rate in the Plzeňský Region (1.8) was the same value as the national average. In relative terms, most marriages were divorced in the Domažlice District (2.1), whereas the least in the Plzeň-město District and Rokycany District (the same value 1.7).

Important food enterprises in the Plzeňský Region are: Plzeňský Prazdroj, a.s. (founded in 1842) - the biggest Czech beer exporter (which became a part of Asahi Group Holdings, Ltd. - a Japanese beer brewing company); STOCK Plzeň-Božkov s.r.o., a traditional producer of spirits (nowadays the biggest producer of spirits in the Czech Republic), and BOHEMIA SEKT s.r.o. in Starý Plzenec - an important wine producer.

Engineering belongs to important industries in the Region; it is associated especially with the name of Škoda. The following belong to the key assortment produced by Škoda: facilities for both classical and nuclear power engineering and petrochemical industry, products of ironworks and forges, heavy machine tools, rolling mill equipment, sugar mill equipment, hydraulic and curing presses, gear units, rail vehicles, trolleybuses, complete electric motor drives, steam turbines for combined cycle applications, and extraction steam turbines. Own research and a trading company are also developing there. Other important industrial enterprises, which have an influence on the Region's economy, are as

follows: DIOSS Nýřany a.s. producing products from metal sheets and tubes, OKULA Nýřsko, a.s. focusing mainly on plastics processing and frames of glasses, and LASSELSBERGER, s.r.o., which represents ceramics manufacturing.

Thanks to its location, the Plzeňský Region is attractive for foreign investors. A dominant position among foreign investors belongs to a Japanese plant Panasonic Heating & Ventilation Air-Conditioning Czech, s.r.o., which manufactures complete A2W (air-to-water) indoor/outdoor units of heat pumps called Panasonic Aquarea. Other important foreign companies are: VISHAY ELECTRONIC spol. s r.o., a company producing electronic parts, BORGERS CS spol. s r.o. producing textiles and textile floor coverings for the automotive industry, MD ELEKTRONIK spol. s r.o. producing jumper cables (connector systems), and Daikin Industries Czech Republic s.r.o. producing heat pumps, air conditioning, and ventilation systems.

Cross-border cooperation with the neighbouring Bavaria within Euroregions helps reduce socio-economic differences. In the Plzeňský Region, the Domažlice District and the Klatovy District (Euroregion Šumava) and the Tachov District (Euroregion Egrensis) use a European cross-border cooperation programme.

The 2022 number of employees in the Region amounted to 225.7 thousand headcount persons (by the workplace method including enterprises with less than 20 employees, according to preliminary data), which is 36.8% of the Region's total population. The average gross monthly wage per headcount person amounted to CZK 36 279 (according to preliminary data) ranking the Plzeňský Region fourth in the CR behind the Hl. m. Praha Region, the Středočeský Region and the Jihomoravský Region. The average wage, however, was by 4.8% lower than the national average.

According to the Statistical Business Register, there were 137 082 businesses in the Plzeňský Region as at 31 December 2023, most of which were natural persons (75.0%). Most of the businesses (38.3%) have their seat in the Plzeň-město District. As for employment, a major role in the Region is played by 61 businesses with 500+ employees, of which 24 businesses employ over 1 000 employees.

The following organisations and companies in the Region have rather high numbers of employees: Fakultní nemocnice Plzeň, ŠKODA TRANSPORTATION a.s., International Automotive Components Group s.r.o., Krajské ředitelství policie Plzeňského kraje, Plzeňský Prazdroj, a.s., Západočeská univerzita v Plzni, MD ELEKTRONIK spol. s r.o., GRAMMER CZ, s.r.o., Statutární město Plzeň, Daikin Industries Czech Republic s.r.o., Autoneum Pilsen s r.o.

Within the CR, the Plzeňský Region ranks among Regions with rather low share of the unemployed. There were 12 250 job applicants kept in the labour office register in the Region as at 31 December 2023. Compared to other Regions of the CR, the Plzeňský Region has the third lowest share of the unemployed (2.90%). The highest shares of the unemployed was reported for the Rokycany District (3.64%), whereas the lowest share was in the Plzeň-jih District (2.00%).

There were 20 386 vacancies kept in the labour office register in the Plzeňský Region as at 31 December 2023, i.e. approximately 0.6 job applicants per vacancy. The worst ratio was in the Klatovy District (1.0 job applicants per vacancy). Graduate and juvenile job applicants accounted for 5.7% of the Region's total number of unemployed job applicants kept in the labour office register.

A network of pre-school and school facilities comprises 281 nursery schools, 227 basic schools, 15 grammar schools, and 45 programmes of technical (vocational) education at secondary schools excluding follow-up courses. Higher education in the Region is provided by the Západočeská univerzita v Plzni (University of West Bohemia in the city of Plzeň) at its 9 faculties (namely the Faculty of Economics, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Applied Sciences, the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, the Faculty of Health Care Studies, and the Ladislav Sutnar Faculty of Design and Art). Students can also study at the Faculty of Medicine in Plzeň (which belongs to the Charles University in Prague), further in a university centre in Pilsen (which belongs to the Metropolitan University Prague), and in Klatovy in a consulting centre of the Faculty of Economics and Management (which is a part of the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague).

The Region has favourable conditions for tourism. The city of Plzeň offers many cultural heritage sites; also its historic underground is interesting (it is almost 20 kilometres long and belongs to the largest in Central Europe). As for natural points of interest, there is the Bolevec lake system in Plzeň, which is from technical as well as landscape point of view a unique late Gothic work from the 15th century. There is a dense network of recreation and hiking trails in the Region. Other frequently visited places are the

zoological and botanical gardens of the city of Plzeň and hills in the surroundings of Pilsen: Krkavec, Chlum, and Sylván with outlook towers.

Monuments of cultural heritage in the Region are as follows: the Manětín baroque chateau, the Plasy Monastery (a national cultural monument), ruins of the Radyně Gothic castle and the Buben Gothic castle, the Kaceřov Renaissance chateau, ruins of the Rabštejn nad Střelou castle, the Horšovský Týn Renaissance chateau, the Švihov water castle, the Kozel State Chateau, the Nebílovy baroque chateau, the Lužany Chateau, the Kladrby Monastery, the Kašperk Castle, ruins of the Libštejn Gothic castle, and many others. Also the town of Domažlice and its traditional summer Chod Festival (in August) attract attention of many visitors.

Excellent conditions for summer and winter recreation are in the Šumava Mountains thanks to its numerous hiking trails and cycling tracks. For downhill and cross-country skiing, there are many ski slopes that are taken care of as well as tracks for cross-country skiing. For recreation and improvement of health condition one can stay in the Konstantinovy Lázně spa that focuses on prophylaxis, treatment, and rehabilitation regarding cardiovascular diseases, on treatment of the locomotive system and the respiratory system. Other places in the Region suitable for recreation include the Hracholusky Reservoir and the Berounka River often visited by water sportsmen.