

Žilinský kraj - Characteristic of the region

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Location, area, geographical conditions

Žilinský kraj is located in the north-western part of Slovakia. The region is spread over an area of 6 808.5 km². It occupies 13.9% of Slovak territory and it is the third largest region in the Slovak Republic. The north-western border is also the state border with the Czech Republic and in the north it borders with the Republic of Poland. The region has common borders with three other Slovak regions – Trenčiansky kraj, Banskobystrický kraj and Prešovský kraj.

The territory of the Žilinský kraj is characterized by the diversity of the landscape structure. From the valley flood plains of watercourses (Váh, Kysuca, Turiec, Orava rivers), through the agricultural and forest landscape to the alpine landscape of the ridge zones of the mountains Západné Tatry, Nízke Tatry, Chočské vrchy, Veľká Fatra, Malá Fatra, Javorníky and Strážovské vrchy. It is mainly a mountainous landscape with a low proportion of arable land, which has an attractive natural environment, particularly suitable for the development of tourism, water and winter sports. The climate of Žilinský kraj is from moderately warm to cold humid. The lowest temperatures in Slovakia are measured in Oravská Lesná municipality. The main stream of the region is Váh river, which arises from the confluence of two rivers Čierny Váh and Biely Váh in the cadastral area of Kráľová Lehota municipality. The small flows of Váh river are significantly improved, especially by Liptovská Mara dam build up on Váh river and the largest dam Oravská priehrada on Orava river. The river network is formed also by rivers Kysuca, Turiec, Rajčianka, Revúca, Belá and Varínka. The highest place in the region is Kriváň hill (2 492 m above sea level), the lowest place is the outflow of Váh river from the region in the cadastral area of Maršová – Rašov municipality (286 m above sea level).

Mineral resources of the region are created by deposits of stone used in construction, reserves of gravel and sand. Limestone is mined as a raw material for the production of cement and lime in the area of Malá Fatra mountain. There are peat deposits and wood reserves in Horná Orava area.

There are 4 national parks in the region – Tatranský národný park, Národný park Nízke Tatry, Národný park Veľká Fatra and Národný park Malá Fatra, 3 protected landscape areas – Strážovské vrchy, Kysuce and Horná Orava, 57 national nature reserves, 38 nature reserves, 40 natural monuments, 18 national natural monuments, 17 protected areas and 7 special protection areas.

Žilinský kraj includes five natural historical regions Horné Považie, Kysuce, Liptov, Orava and Turiec.

According to the territorial-administrative arrangement based on the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No 221/1996 Coll. Žilinský kraj is broken down into 11 districts: Bytča, Čadca, Dolný Kubín, Kysucké Nové Mesto, Liptovský Mikuláš, Martin, Námestovo, Ružomberok, Turčianske Teplice, Tvrdošín and Žilina. The smallest district is Kysucké Nové

Mesto district with an area of 173.7 km², which occupies 2.6% of the total area of the region. The largest district is Liptovský Mikuláš district (1 341 km²), which takes for almost a fifth of the regional area.

There are 315 municipalities in the region, 19 of them have the urban status. Almost a quarter of the regional population lives in the three largest towns – Žilina, Martin and Liptovský Mikuláš.

Demographic background

As of December 31, 2019, the population of Žilinský kraj reached 691 509 and its share in the Slovak population was 12.7%. The population density per 1 km² was 102 inhabitants. The districts with the highest population density were Žilina district with 194 inhabitants per km² and Kysucké Nové Mesto district with 190 inhabitants per km². The smallest density, only 40 inhabitants per 1 km², was in Turčianske Teplice district.

In 2019, 7 432 children were born and 6 651 people died in Žilinský kraj. Demographic development in the last five years was characterized by a slight acceleration in population reproduction. The growth of birth rate was reflected in higher natural increase of population. Nevertheless, the proportion of the child component in the population stagnated and the proportion of the population in the post-productive age grew. This led to a process of demographic aging of population. In 2019, the share of the population of pre-productive age (0 – 14 years) and post-productive age (65 years and over) was equal and represented 15.8%. The productive population (15 – 64) accounted for 68.4% and since 2015 its share has been declining every year. The average age of the population reached 40.5 years and the aging index was 99.8.

In 2019, 3 861 marriages were concluded, 1 125 marriages were divorced. In the five-year period 2015 – 2019, the values of the gross marriage rate ranged from 5.21 ‰ in 2015 to 5.88 ‰ in 2018 and the values of the gross divorce rate from 1.52 ‰ in 2016 to 1.67 ‰ in 2018.

Economic and social specifics

The region is one of the important economic regions with a developed industry. In 2019, the proportion of the economically active population was 50.1% and the economic activity rate

reached 59.4%. The employment rate has been rising slightly to 68.5% for a long time, and the unemployment rate has fallen sharply to 4.5% in 2019. The average nominal monthly earnings achieved EUR 1 174 and lagged behind the national average by 7%.

At the end of 2019, 30.2 thousand legal persons (85.9% of them were enterprises) and 55.6 thousand natural persons (95.1% of them were self-employed persons) run a business in Žilinský kraj. The enterprises focused their activities mainly in the sector of wholesale and retail trade, followed by industry, construction and professional, scientific and technical activities. More than 35% of self-employed persons did business in construction, almost 18% in industry and 16% in the wholesale and retail trade.

In assessing of economic position in terms of GDP, Žilinský kraj belongs to regions with medium output in the framework of Slovakia. In 2018, the regional gross domestic product reached the value of EUR 9 728 million at current prices. The volume of GDP generated in the region represented 10.8% of the national GDP. The regional GDP recalculated per capita reached EUR 14 079 in current prices. This value represents 85.5% of national GDP per capita.

According to economic activities in 2018, the largest share had industry. It was 26.1% of total regional gross value added. The proportion of trade, transport, accommodation and food service activities accounted for 15.9% and proportion of public administration, defence, compulsory social security, education, health and social work 13%.

Extensive mountains in Žilinský kraj predetermine that the share of agricultural land (35.1%) is the lowest in comparison with other regions. The region is characterized by the cultivation of cereals, potatoes and fodder in crop production. Compared to other regions, sheep and cattle breeding are more strongly represented in animal production, especially in Liptovský Mikuláš district. Poultry farming within the region is most widespread in Martin district.

The largest industrial company in the region is the automobile plant KIA near Žilina town. The production of machines is developed in Považie area and Turiec area, the production of iron and electronics in Orava area, and the production of paper in towns Žilina and Ružomberok. Hydroelectric power plants in Váh river are also of great importance. Turnover in the industrial entities of Žilinský kraj reached the amount of EUR 16.9 billion in 2019. From the territorial point of view, the decisive part of regional turnover was produced by enterprises in Žilina district.

The construction has a strong position in Žilinský kraj. This was also reflected in the second highest volumes of construction production. In 2019 construction production carried out by own employees reached the amount of EUR 729 mill. and contractually agreed construction production EUR 1 045.1 mill. There were built 2 348 dwellings in the region, the most in Žilina district (533 dwellings).

Žilinský kraj has a very good transport position within Slovakia on important international and domestic roads. The main route from the Czech Republic to Ukraine and the route from Bratislava and Šahy to Poland pass through it. At the end of 2019, the length of the road network was 2 054 km, of which 102 km were motorways. Traffic inspectorates registered 392 820 motor vehicles, 71.1% of them were passenger cars. The organization of railway transport predetermines Žilinský kraj as the place of connection of the Slovak railway network to the

pan-European system. The connection is provided by the main line Bratislava - Košice, which passes through Žilina, and by lines from neighbouring Poland and the Czech Republic, which pass through Čadca towards Žilina. Žilina is an important transport junction for both the region and Slovakia. The railways Žilina - Rajec, Čadca - Makov in Kysuce and Kraľovany - Trstená in Orava have a regional character. International airport is located 10 km from the center of the region in Dolný Hričov municipality.

Education is provided by a network of school facilities. In 2019, there were 364 kindergartens, 254 primary schools, 29 grammar schools and 56 secondary vocational schools in the region. The seat of the University of Žilina is located in the centre of the region, the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine of the Comenius University is located in Martin, the Catholic University in Ružomberok and the Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik in Liptovský Mikuláš.

In 2019, Žilinský kraj provided health care in 1 565 health care facilities, which also included 11 hospitals, 1 200 outpatient health care facilities and 4 institutes for treatment. The region is rich in the occurrence of mineral and thermal waters. They are used for treatment in the spas Rajecké Teplice (deceases of musculoskeletal and nervous system), Turčianske Teplice (urological and rheumatic diseases), Lúčky (female reproductive diseases) and Liptovský Ján (diseases of digestive system and rheumatic diseases). Geothermal springs in municipalities Liptovský Ján, Bešeňová, Rajec, Oravice and Stráňavy are used for recreational purposes. The mineral waters Budiš, Fatra and Korytnica are also used as table waters.

Žilinský kraj is an important cultural region of Slovakia and also has a rich cultural and historical potential. In 2019, 10 theatre scenes in permanent operation, 11 galleries, including branches, 40 museums and 237 functioning libraries were available to visitors. The most famous national cultural monuments are manor house in Bytča, which was originally built as a water castle, open air museum with forest railway in Vychylovka, castle in Oravský Podzámok, Slovak National Museum in Martin, the first building of Matica Slovenská (the institution for development and consolidation of Slovak patriotism) in Martin, forest railway in Oravská Lesná, the museum of Slovak poet P.O. Hviezdoslav in Dolný Kubín and the ruins of Strečno castle near Žilina. The unique folk architecture in Čičmany, a wooden nativity scene in Rajecká Lesná are also known, as well as a world unique - the wire work exhibition of the Považské Múzeum, located in Budatínsky hrad castle in Žilina. The Vikolínec settlement - a monument reserve of folk architecture is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. There is a rare UNESCO monument - a Gothic wooden church from the 15th century in Tvrdošín.

Not only a number of cultural and historical monuments, but especially the natural beauty of the north Slovakia mountains, caused the second highest number of visitors in comparison with other regions. In 2019 the region visited 1 316 000 guests. The region also had the highest number of accommodation facilities (1 168).