Location, area, geographical conditions

Nitriansky kraj with area of 6 343.7 km² occupies 12.9 % of the territory of Slovak Republic. It is located in the south western part of the Slovak Republic, bordering the Republic of Hungary in the south, Banskobystrický kraj in the east, Trenčiansky kraj in the north and Trnavský kraj in the west. There is the southernmost point of the Slovak Republic in the region, in Patince municipality in Komárno district (47°43'52"N).

The relief of the region has mostly a flat and lowland character interrupted by hills. Almost the entire region is located on the Podunajská páhorkatina hills and Podunajská rovina plain, which are the units of Podunajská nížina lowland. Tríbeč mountain stretch through the north of the region, the northeast is bordered by the foothills of the Štiavnické vrchy mountain and partly by Pohronský Inovec mountain. The highest place in the region is Panská Javorina hill with a height of 942 m above sea level. The lowest point is the outflow of the river Dunaj (Danube) from the region at the state border with Hungary (101 m above sea level). Quality agricultural land forms a substantial part of the south and southeast of the region. The region is one of the warmest areas and the most productive agricultural centres in Slovakia. The region, especially its southern areas, is rich with their water resources. Several rivers flow through the region: Váh – the longest Slovak river, Dunaj, Nitra, Hron, Ipel and Žitava. The rivers Danube and Ipel form the natural state border with Hungary.

Nitriansky kraj is rich with its raw material deposits such a gravel, building stone and brick raw material.

Its territory is covered by the protected landscape areas Dunajské luhy floodplains (Komárno district), Štiavnické vrchy mountains (Levice district) and Ponitrie area (districts Nitra, Topoľčany, and Zlaté Moravce). Of the other small protected areas, there are 11 national nature reserves, 38 nature reserves, 19 natural monuments, 55 protected areas and 9 bird protection areas.

According to the territorial-administrative arrangement in accordance with the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No 221/1996 Coll. is divided into 7 districts: Komárno, Levice, Nitra, Nové Zámky, Šaľa, Topoľčany and Zlaté Moravce. The smallest district of the region is Šaľa (355.9 km²) and the largest is Levice district (1 551.1 km²), which is also the largest district in the Slovak Republic.

There are 354 municipalities in Nitriansky kraj, of which 16 municipalities have a status of the town. The proportion of the urban population is 44.9 % of all inhabitants of the region. Dominant town is the centre of the region – Nitra, in which 76 028 inhabitants lived at the end of 2020. Towns with population higher than 30 000 include Nové Zámky, Komárno and Levice.

Demographic background
The population of Nitriansky kraj as at December 31, 2020, was 671 508, which corresponds 12.3 % of the total population of Slovakia. The population density per 1 km² was 106 inhabitants. The most densely populated district was Nitra district where 186 inhabitants per 1 km² lived, the most sparsely populated was Levice district with a density of 71 inhabitants per 1 km².

It was possible to observe significant changes in demographic development, which were a reflection of the economic and social situation of the region. There has been a long-term declining tendency for demographic reproduction. The natural change has shown negative values for a long time and in 2020 it reached the value of -3.8 per 1000 inhabitants. The population ageing process continued. Between 2016 and 2020, the share of the population older than 65 grew by 2.4 p. p., but the share of the population younger than 14 years by 0.4 p. p. In 2020 the mean age of the regional population was 43 years and the ageing index reached the value of 135.6, which were the highest achieved values within other regions.

The number of marriages in the region has been declining since 2018, the number of divorces has been decreasing for a long time too. In 2020, only 2 716 couples were married and 1 144 marriages were divorced. In comparison with previous year the number of marriages went down by 20 %, the number of divorces by 10 %.

**Economic and social specifics**

In 2020, the share of the economically active population was 49.8 % in Nitriansky kraj. The economic activity rate reached 57.8 %. Since 2010 to 2019 the employment rate in age 20 – 64 years had been rising. In 2020 it dropped by 1 p. p. at the value 72.8%. Contrary, the unemployment rate has been falling between years 2010 – 2019, but in 2020 it increased by 0.6 at the value 5.2 %. The average monthly earnings were by 10.7 % lower than the national average and reached the level of EUR 1 191.

At the end of 2020, there operated almost 31,4 thous. legal persons in Nitriansky kraj, 87 % of them were enterprises and 44.1 thous. were natural persons. Approximately 92,8 % of natural person run business on the base of tradesmen act. The enterprises carried out their activities mainly in the sectors of trade, professional, scientific and technical activities and industry, while self-employed persons in construction as well as in trade and industry.

In 2019, the regional gross domestic product at current prices reached EUR 9 940 mill. in Nitriansky kraj. This corresponds 10.6 % of national GDP. The regional GDP per capita reached EUR 14 721 at current prices and was by 14.5 % lower than the Slovak average.

According to economic activities, industry accounted for the highest share on the regional gross value added in 2019 (35 %). Trade, transport, accommodation and food service activities accounted for 18 % and public administration and defence, compulsory social security, human health and social activities for 12.2 %.

The region manages the largest area of agricultural land of all regions within the Slovak
Republic (464.1 thousand hectares). It is one of the most important producers of agricultural crops such as wheat, barley, grain maize, peas, sugar-beet, rape, sunflower and it is the largest producer of cereals, oil plants, legume, and grapes in Slovakia. Livestock production focuses on poultry and pigs breeding.

The composition of the industry is varied, the centre of the region – Nitra is dominant. The very important enterprise is the Jaguar Land Rover – automobile manufacturer. The core industrial branches include the automotive, electrical, machinery, food, chemical and rubber industry. An important chemical factory Duslo, a. s. is placed in Šaľa town. There are produced nitrogenous fertilizers and rubber chemicals. In 2020, industrial enterprises reached turnover of EUR 7.3 bill. It declined by 10.3 % compared previous year.

In terms of construction production, Nitriansky kraj is one of the weaker regions. Regional construction organizations by own employees carried out construction production in the amount of EUR 442.8 mill. Contractually agreed construction production reached EUR 654.7 mill. Dwelling construction in the region grew in period 2017 – 2019. In 2020 the change came, there were only 2 025 new dwellings completed. It was by 5.3 % less than in previous year. Almost 46 % of them were built in Nitra district.

Nitriansky kraj has a large network of regional and international roads. The length of the roads was 2 594 km, only 67 km of them were motorways. In 2020, exactly 459 900 motor vehicles were registered in the region. The share of the passenger cars was 70 %. The international railway also passes through the region. There is an important river port on the Dunaj (Danube) river in Komárno, which is connected to the European river network Rhine–Main-Danube. The important pipelines pass through the territory of Nitriansky kraj. The most important gas pipelines are Transit and Interstate and the oil pipelines are Družba and Adria.

A dense network of school facilities provided education in 419 kindergartens, 283 basic schools, 22 grammar schools, 58 secondary vocational schools in 2020. There are two universities – Slovak University of Agriculture, University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra and J. Selye University in Komárno.

The health care was provided especially in 11 hospitals, 1 295 out-patient care facilities and 5 institutes for treatment in 2020. There were together 1 616 health facilities.

The development of regional culture started at the period of early settlement of the ancient Slavs. It continued in Pribinove Nitrianske kniežatstvo principality and during period of Veľká Morava (Great Moravia) through the middle ages until the modern age. Nitra has a long tradition as a regional cultural centre. It was the most important centre of Slavic education, culture and the Christian life. Nitra is a town with the oldest written mention (826) within Slovakia.

At the territory of the region operate 15 scenes in permanent operations, 3 galleries, including branches, 18 museums and 222 libraries. Divadlo Andreja Bagara theatre, Ponitrianske múzeum museum and Nitrianska galéria gallery deserve attention.

The most important cultural and historical monuments in the region are the castles: Levický hrad, hrad Gýmeš, Nitriansky hrad, Oponický hrad, Topoľčiansky hrad, hrad Hrušov and Čierny
Regional historical settlement structures are present in Nitra – town monument reservation and down town, in Brhlovce – complex of rock dwellings (Levice district) and monuments zones in towns Šahy, Komárno, Topoľčany, Zlaté Moravce and in Bátovce municipality (Levice district). Arborétum Mlyňany and the National Stud Farm in Topoľčianky are also frequently visited places. The region is rich with thermal springs in towns and municipalities Podhájská, Patince, Komárno, Poľný Kesov and Štúrovo. Thermal swimming pools and aqua parks built in them are frequently visited. In 2020, Nitriansky kraj welcome 180 thous. visitors. They were accommodated in 380 accommodation facilities.