

Prešovský kraj - Characteristic of the region

22.03.2024 | | Počet zobrazení: null

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Location, area, geographical conditions

Prešovský kraj is located in the northeast of the Slovak Republic. With its area of 8 972.7 km², it occupies 18.3% of the country. It is the second largest region within Slovakia. The long northern border is also the state border with the Republic of Poland. It borders Ukraine in the east, Košický kraj in the south, Banskobystrický kraj in the southwest and Žilinský kraj in the west.

The northernmost point of the region is located in the cadastral area of Becherov, the southernmost in Sečovská Polianka, the westernmost in Vysoké Tatry and the easternmost point, which is also the easternmost point of Slovakia, is located in Nová Sedlica. Gerlachovský štít peak (2 655 m above sea level) is the highest point of the region as well as Slovakia. The lowest point is the outflow of Topľa river from the region in the cadastral area of Sečovská Polianka (104 m above sea level). The relative altitude difference is 2 551 m. Due to the different altitude of highlands and lowlands, the region is divided into three climatic areas – cold, moderately warm and warm.

The relief of the region is significantly rugged. The largest areas of the region are occupied by the mountains Spišská Magura, Podtatranská brázda, Spišsko-šarišské medzihorie, Levočské vrchy, Bachureň, Šarišská vrchovina, Pieniny, Ľubovnianska vrchovina, Čergov, Busov, Ondavská a Laborecká vrchovina, Beskydské predhorie and Bukovské vrchy. These mountains create Vonkajšie Západné Karpaty sub-province. The territory of Prešovský kraj also include mountains Vysoké Tatry, Podtatranská kotlina, Kozie chrbty, Nízke Tatry, Hornádska kotlina and Branisko (mountains of Fatransko-tatranská oblasť) as well as the mountains Slovenský raj and Čierna hora, which are included in mountain range Slovenské rudohorie. Košická kotlina basin, Slánske vrchy hills and Vihorlatské vrchy hills still extend by their northern parts to Prešovský kraj.

The upper sections of the main rivers Hornád, Torysa, Topľa, Ondava, Laborec and Poprad are located on the territory of Prešovský kraj. The rivers Poprad and Dunajec form a part of the border with Poland. The basin of the Poprad river includes a very important territory of Vysoké Tatry mountains. Eleven watercourses from this area provide drinking water supply. The reservoirs Starina and especially Veľká Domaša hydrologically and qualitatively affect the streams on which they lie.

The region has rich reserves of minerals. The most important of them are reserves of rock salt, limestone, building stone, brick raw materials, zeolite and manganese ore.

There are 5 national parks – Tatranský národný park, Pieninský národný park, Národný park Nízke Tatry, Národný park Slovenský raj a Národný park Poloniny, 2 protected landscape areas – Vihorlatský prales, Východné Karpaty, 51 national nature reserves, 90 nature reserves, 5 national natural monuments, 33 natural monuments, 10 protected areas and 10 bird protection areas.

Administratively, the region is divided in accordance with the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No 221/1996 Coll. to 13 districts: Bardejov, Humenné, Kežmarok, Levoča, Medzilaborce, Poprad, Prešov, Sabinov, Snina, Stará Ľubovňa, Stropkov, Svidník and Vranov nad Topľou. The largest district is Poprad district (1 104.6 km²) and the smallest Stropkov district (388.9 km²). There are 665 municipalities in the region, 23 of them have the status of a town. Prešovský kraj together with Nitriansky kraj have the lowest shares of urban population in Slovakia at the level of 44.9%. The most populated is Prešov (82.9 thous. inhabitants) – the centre of the region. It is also the third largest town in Slovakia. The second largest town of the region is Poprad with 49.1 thous. residents.

Demographic background

Prešovský kraj is the most populated within Slovakia with a population of 808,090 as at December 31, 2022. It accounted on the Slovak population by 14.9%. Population density was equal to 90 inhabitants per km² and reached the second lowest value after Banskobystrický kraj. The most populated was the Prešov district (186 inhabitants per km²) and the least populated the Medzilaborce district (25 inhabitants per km²).

During the year 2022, there were born 9,736 children and 7,752 people died. In a long period the region has been characterized by the highest number of births and the highest natural increase (1,984 persons in 2022), but among Slovak regions it loses the most inhabitants by migration (the number of emigrants exceeded the number of immigrants by 1,551 persons in 2022). Despite the high migration balance, it is still one of the three regions in which the population has been growing for a long time.

Compared to other regions, the Prešovský kraj has had the highest proportion of children under 14 and the lowest proportion of elder people over 65 years of age in a long period. In 2022, the share of children was 18.4% and exceeded the share of seniors by 2.9 p.p. The share of the productive population was at the level of 66%. The average age of the population reached 39 years and is the lowest in Slovakia.

In a long-term regional comparison, the Prešovský kraj has the highest marriage rate and the lowest divorce rate. In 2022, 4,760 couples got married and 989 got divorced. The number of marriages increased year-on-year by 8.1% and the number of divorces by 1.4%, but in absolute terms, both values are lower than in the years before the pandemic.

Economic and social specifics

Due to the lack of job opportunities, the inhabitants of Prešovský kraj often went to work in other regions or abroad. The unemployment rate is the highest among the regions for a long time. It reached 11.1% in 2022. The economically active population made up 49.5%, the employment rate in age group 20–64 years reached 70.8%. The average monthly earnings achieved EUR 1,223 and was the lowest within Slovakia.

The conditions and opportunities in this region influenced the business activities of the population. At the end of 2022, there operated 29.5 thous. legal persons, 24.2 thous. of them were profit-oriented enterprises. Almost a third of enterprises did business in trade and industry, 14.6% in construction and 12% in professional, scientific and technical activities. More than 64.1 thous. self-employed natural persons operated in the region, nearly 60.8 thous. of them run business on the base of the tradesmen act. More than 38% of self-employed persons focused their activities on construction, 17.7% on manufacturing and 12.1% on trade.

Prešovský kraj is one of the less efficient regions of Slovakia in the evaluation of its economic position. The regional gross domestic product amounted to EUR 9,995 mill. at current prices in 2022. Its share on national GDP was 9.1%. Regional GDP recalculated per capita reached EUR 12,305 at current prices. This represents only 61.6% of national GDP per capita.

The sector of industry accounted for the largest share (more than quarter), of regional gross value added. The share of wholesale and retail trade, transportation, accommodation and food service activities was 19 % and public administration, compulsory social security, health and social activities for 17.5%.

Agricultural land occupies 41.5% of the total area. Almost two-fifths of the land is arable land, on which mainly cereals, fodder, oilseeds and potatoes are grown. The largest production of potatoes is typical for this region. Cattle breeding predominates in animal production, especially in the Bardejov district.

The industry in the region is diverse without a significant focus on some manufacturing sectors. The manufacture of metals, wood, food, electrical and machinery equipment, chemicals, textile and clothes are importantly presented. Industry is concentrated mainly in district towns. The most important enterprises of the region include Tatrabagónka in Poprad, Lear Corporation Seating Slovakia in Prešov, Pivovary TOPVAR, a.s., MECOM GROUP in Humenné, MILK-AGRO in Prešov, Nexis Fibers in Humenné, Bukóza Export-Import in Vranov nad Topľou, Chemosvit Folie in Svit, Bukocel in Hencovce and others. Turnover of industrial enterprises seating in Prešovský kraj reached EUR 7.2 bill. in 2022. There were employed 52.6 thous. persons in the industrial sector.

The third highest volumes of construction production reflected a strong position of the construction in this region. Construction organizations carried out construction production by own employees for value EUR 791.4 mill., contractually agreed construction production achieved EUR 817.4 mill. in 2022. There were completed 2,360 new dwellings, 39% of them in Prešov district and 16% in Poprad district.

The Prešovský kraj has an important position on the north – south but also east – west lines of

international transport. The important main Slovak northern road corridor connecting towns Bratislava – Žilina – Poprad – Prešov – Košice passes through it, in the direction north – south the eastern international corridor Poland– Stará Ľubovňa – Prešov and Poland – Svidník – Prešov, which continues along a common route to Košice and Hungary. International railway lines, resp. railway lines of national importance pass through town Žilina – Košice – Medzilaborce and Plaveč – Prešov – Košice. There is an international airport in Poprad. The airport serves mainly for area of Vysoké Tatry, other parts of the region have air connections from the international airport in Košice. Widely branched lines provide public bus transport. For individual motorists, there is a dense network of roads of various categories with a length of 3,186 km equipped by services and petrol stations. More than a fifth of Slovak motorways are located in Prešovský kraj. There were registered 423 thous. motor vehicles in 2022, almost 73% of them were passenger cars.

A wide network of school facilities represents the regional education. There were 539 kindergartens, 378 primary schools, 38 grammar schools and 63 secondary vocational schools in 2022. The University in Prešov, College of International Business ISM Slovakia and the Faculty of manufacturing technologies of the Technical University in Košice have the seat in the centre of the region.

Health care was provided in 2,074 health care facilities, which also included 17 hospitals, 1,634 out-patient care units and 8 institutes for treatment in 2022. Natural curative spas for treatment of respiratory diseases in Vysoké Tatry, for treatment of the digestive system in Bardejov, for treatment of circulatory systems in Vyšné Ružbachy and for treatment of skin diseases in Červený Kláštor complement the network of health care facilities. In addition to the sources of medicinal mineral waters used in spas, the territory of Prešovský kraj is also rich in natural sources of mineral table waters Ľubovnianska, Sulínka, Salvator, Baldovská, Cigeľka and others

There were available 8 theatres including small and independent, 18 permanent cinemas, 5 galleries, including branches and 29 museums for visitors of the cultural events in 2022. Readers had 217 libraries at their disposal.

The region is proud of many cultural and historical monuments, where the towns of Levoča, Prešov, Bardejov, Poprad and Kežmarok deserve special attention. The administrative, economic, cultural and social centre of the region is Prešov, where are also the seats of important ecclesiastical institutions of the Greek Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelical Church.

The natural beauty of the region and convenient climatic conditions have created favourable conditions for the development of tourism. The Vysoké Tatry mountains and the districts Bardejov, Kežmarok, Prešov and Stará Ľubovňa are the most visited within the region. There were located 1,027 accommodation facilities, approximately 889 thous. visitors used services of these facilities in 2022. In a regional comparison, it is the third most visited region.