

## Košický kraj - Characteristic of the region

14.05.2024 | | Počet zobrazení: null

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### Location, area, geographical conditions

Košický kraj with an area of 6 754.3 km<sup>2</sup> is located in the southeast of the Slovak Republic and occupies 13.8% of its territory. It is the fourth largest in terms of area within Slovakia. It borders the Republic of Hungary in the south, Ukraine in the east, Prešovský kraj in the north and Banskobystrický kraj in the west.

The highest point of the region is Stolica hill in mountain range Slovenské rudohorie with height 1,476.5 m, the lowest is the bank of the Bodrog river at the outlet of the region near the state border with Hungary with altitude 93.7 m above sea level. Watercourses belong to the type of lowland, highland and mid-mountain rivers. The largest river is Bodrog, which together with its confluences, rivers Ondava and Latorica, drains the easternmost part of the region. The river Hornád with its tributaries drained two basins Hornádska kotlina and Košická kotlina. The river Slaná drained the western part of region and the river Tisa the southeastern area. The water reservoirs Zemplínska šírava, Bukovec, Ružín, Palcmanská Maša and Dobšiná are economic and recreational important. Forests cover two-fifths of the surface, in the most forested district of Slovakia – Gelnica district up to three quarters. They are located mainly in the mountains and foothills in the northern and southwestern part of the region. In the southeast of the territory are floodplain forests, the eastern and southern part consists of lowlands and hills. The area belongs to the northern temperate zone with average annual temperatures at selected meteorological stations around 10 °C. The northern parts are colder, but some southeastern areas reaches the temperatures of inland subtropics.

There are ore, non-ore and energy raw materials in the region. From the ore raw materials, the iron and silver ores are important in the districts Rožňava and Spišská Nová Ves. Magnesite deposits near Košice, rock salt in Michalovce district, talc, gypsum in districts Rožňava and Spišská Nová Ves are significant. There are various types of building stone, brick clay, limestone, kaolin, gravel and others in the region. The energy sources are crude oil and natural gas in districts Michalovce and Trebišov. Significant geothermal springs are located in Košická kotlina basin in the Ďurkov locality and in the foothills of mountain Vihorlat. Košická kotlina basin is one of the most promising areas in terms of the use of geothermal energy. It is an assumption that water with a temperature of 150 degrees Celsius is at a depth of three thousand meters.

There are 2 national parks in Košický kraj – Národný park Slovenský raj and Národný park Slovenský kras, 2 protected landscape areas – Latorica and Vihorlat, 29 national nature reserves, 49 nature reserves, 23 national natural monuments, 26 natural monuments, 11 protected areas and 10 bird protection areas. The ice cave near Dobšiná and the geyser in

Herľany are a natural unique feature of European importance. The caves Ochtinská aragonitová jaskyňa, Domica, Jasovská a Gombasecká jaskyňa are also unique.

In the past, four historical regions – Spiš, Gemer, Abov and Zemplín created actual territory of Košický kraj. Up to now, each of them maintains its own traditions, habits, customs and folklore.

According to the territorial-administrative arrangement in accordance with the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No 221/1996 Coll. Košický kraj consists of 11 districts: Gelnica, Košice I, Košice II, Košice III, Košice IV, Košice-okolie, Michalovce, Rožňava, Sobrance, Spišská Nová Ves and Trebišov. The smallest district with an area of 16.8 km<sup>2</sup> is Košice III district and the largest with an area of 1 534.6 km<sup>2</sup> is Košice-okolie district.

There are 440 municipalities in the region, of which 17 obtained the status of a town. The proportion of urban population is 52.9%. The administrative, economic, political, educational and cultural center of the region is Košice. It is the second largest city in Slovakia. It consists of 22 city areas with their own local government. At the end of 2022, the city population accounted 226 thous. inhabitants, which represented almost 30% of regional population.

## Demographic background

At the end of 2023, there lived 779,073 inhabitants in Košický kraj. Its share on the Slovak population was 14.4%. The region was the second largest in Slovakia from population point of view. It belonged to the regions with high population density, 115 inhabitants lived at 1 km<sup>2</sup>. The highest density of population had four districts creating the city Košice, sparsely populated are districts Sobrance, Rožňava and Gelnica.

There were more births (7,908) than deaths (7,622) in 2023, but despite this, the region registered total decreased of population for the third year in a row, currently by 432 people. The low natural population increase (286 persons) could not compensate for the negative migration balance (718 persons).

The regional population was relatively younger compared to the Slovak average. The average age of the population in 2023 was 40.5 years. The population in the pre-productive age (0 – 14 years) made up 17.4%, in the productive age (15 – 64 years) 65.5% and in the post-productive age (65 years and older) 17.1%. The child component of the population still prevailed over the senior population, but its growth pace was slower than that of the post-productive population.

In 2023, 3,691 couples got married and 993 marriages were divorced. The number of marriages decreased by 8% year-on-year as well as compared to the average of 5 years before the pandemic. The number of divorces decreased by up to 12% year-on-year, and was the lowest in the last ten years.

## Economic and social specifics

Job opportunities in Košický kraj are concentrated mainly in centre of the region – Košice and its surroundings. More remote districts show a lack of them. The share of the economically active population was 49%. The economic activity rate reached 59.7%, the employment rate (in age 20 – 64 years) 71.7% and the unemployment rate 9.3%. The average gross monthly earnings reached EUR 1,415 and lagged behind the national average by 5.7%.

At the end of year 2022, 33 thous. legal entities did business in the districts of the region, more than 85% of them were enterprises. The number of natural persons – entrepreneurs reached 40 thous., of which self-employed persons made up 91.1%. Self-employed persons mainly worked in the field of construction (24.5%), trade (18.8%) and industrial production (14.6%). Enterprises concentrated their activities mainly in the trade (19.3%), in professional, scientific and technical activities (14.6%) and in industrial production (12.1%).

In terms of the creation of the gross domestic product of Slovakia (12.1% share on national GDP in 2022) and the existing economic base, Košický kraj is one of the most important regions of the Slovak Republic. Regional gross domestic product amounted to EUR 13,289 mill. The inhabitant of Košický kraj in 2022 produced gross domestic product at current prices in the value of EUR 16,876 on average, which represents 84.5% of national GDP per capita.

Industry contributed to the regional gross value added the most (27.1%). The share of trade, transport, accommodation and catering was 18.9%, and the share of public administration, compulsory social security, healthcare and social assistance was 13.9%.

Agricultural land occupies 333 thous. ha, which is almost half of the regional area. More than three-fifths of agricultural land is arable land and one third is permanent grassland and meadow. More than three quarters of arable land is located in the districts Košice-okolie, Michalovce and Trebišov, where is also concentrated most of agricultural production. Forests cover almost two-fifths of the regional surface. The most forested are districts Rožňava, Košice-okolie and Gelnica. The rarity of Košický kraj is Tokaj locality, where a unique Tokaj wine is grown and produced. The breeding of farm animals is mainly concentrated in the vicinity of Košice.

The raw material base of the region is the area of the mountain Slovenské rudohorie, which in the ancient past conditioned the formation of mining, metallurgy of non-ferrous metals and engineering. These sectors, with the dominant position of the modern metallurgical plant and chemical enterprises, represent an important component of the industry. The main industrial branches are metallurgy, engineering, food production, electrical engineering, mining as well as production of construction materials, fuels and energy. Turnover of industrial entities seating in Košický kraj reached EUR 12 bill. in 2022. The enterprises located in Košice created the decisive part of it.

Construction production carried out by own employees reached EUR 725.6 mill. and contractually agreed construction production EUR 1,068.9 mill. in 2022. There were built 1,590 new dwellings in the region. Dwelling construction was located mainly in the centre of the region and its surrounding. Almost three quarters of the dwellings were built there.

The total length of regional road network was 2,395 km and consist of 22 km motorways, 15 km expressways, of 367 km I. class roads and 583 km II. class roads in 2022. There were 419

thous. of motor vehicles registered in Košický kraj. Three quarters of them were passenger cars. International railway lines, resp. railways of national importance are lines connecting towns Žilina – Košice – Medzilaborce and Plaveč – Prešov – Košice. The railway transshipment point in Čierna nad Tisou is important in terms of transport to and from Eastern Europe. An airport of international importance is located in Košice.

Education was provided in 461 kindergartens, 293 primary schools, 34 grammar schools and 59 secondary vocational schools in 2022. Tertiary education is concentrated in Košice, where are 4 universities – University of P. J. Šafárik, Technical University, University of Veterinary Medicine and a private University of Security Management. The Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University in Ružomberok and the Faculty of Business Economics of the University of Economics in Bratislava have the seat in the city.

Health care in Košický kraj was ensured by 1,966 health care facilities, which included 19 hospitals, 1,552 outpatient health care units and 11 institutes for treatment in 2022. Spa treatment of respiratory diseases took place in the climatic spa Štós

The cultural performances and exhibitions were offered to visitors by 14 theatres, including small and independent, 9 permanent cinemas, 28 museums and 3 galleries in 2022. Readers had 123 available libraries. The rich cultural and historical monuments include the St. Elizabeth Dome and the historical city center of Košice, the manor house in Betliar, the castle in Krásna Hôrka, the abbey of the Premonstratensian Order in Jasov, the gothic evangelical church in Štítnik and many other churches included into the Gemer branch of the Gothic Way. Spišský hrad castle, Spišské Podhradie, the church town Spišská Kapitula, the gothic church in Žehra and the wooden churches in Ruská Bystrá have been included among UNESCO monuments. Košice also has the largest zoological garden in Central Europe.

Tourism in the region has very favourable conditions for development due to its natural beauty and aforementioned cultural and historical monuments. More than 357.2 thousand visitors accommodated in 404 accommodation facilities in 2022.