

Košický kraj - Characteristic of the region

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Location, area, geographical conditions

Košický kraj, with an area of 6,754.3 km², is located in the southeastern part of Slovakia and covers 13.8% of the Slovakia territory. It is the fourth largest region in Slovakia by the area. To the south, it borders the Republic of Hungary, to the east, Ukraine, to the north, the Prešovský kraj, and to the west, the Banskobystrický kraj.

The highest point in the region is the Stolica peak in the Stolické vrchy mountain range, reaching an elevation of 1,476.5 meters, while the lowest point is the bank of the Bodrog river at the border with Hungary, at 93.7 meters above sea level. The watercourses in the region are lowland, hilly, and mid-mountain rivers. The largest river is the Bodrog, which, along with its tributaries, drains the easternmost part of the region. The Hornád river and its tributaries drain the Hornádska kotlina and Košická kotlina basins, the Slaná river drains the western part, and the Tisa river flows through the southeastern tip of the territory. Significant water reservoirs include Zemplínska šírava, Bukovec, Ružín, Palcianska Maša, and Dobšiná. Forests cover two-fifths of the region's area, with the most densely forested district in Slovakia, Gelnica, having up to three-quarters of its territory covered by forests. The region's forests are mainly found in the mountainous and foothill areas of the northern and southwestern parts of the region. In the southeast, there are floodplain forests, while the eastern and southern parts have a lowland and hilly character. The region lies in the northern temperate zone, with average annual temperatures around 10°C at selected meteorological stations. The northern parts are cooler, while the southeast can reach temperatures close to inland subtropical regions.

The region is rich in ore, non-ore, and energy raw materials. Among the ore resources, significant deposits of iron and silver ores are found in the Rožňava and Spišská Nová Ves districts. Notable are the magnesite deposits around Košice, salt in the Michalovce district, as well as talc and gypsum in the Rožňava and Spišská Nová Ves districts. Various types of building stone, brick clay, limestone, kaolin, sand and gravel, and other materials are found in the region. Energy raw materials include oil and natural gas in the Michalovce and Trebišov districts. Notable geothermal springs are located in the Košická kotlina basin in the Ďurkov area and in the foothills of Vihorlat mountain. The Košická kotlina basin is one of the most promising areas for the use of geothermal energy, with water temperatures of 150°C expected at a depth of 3,000 meters.

In territory of Košický kraj lie 2 national parks: 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 protected bird areas. The Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa ice cave and the geyser in Herľany are unique natural monuments of European significance. Other unique sites include the caves Ochtinská aragonitová jaskyňa, Domica, Jasovská a Gombasecká jaskyňa.

The region consists of four historical regions: Spiš, Gemer, Abov, and Zemplín. Each of them still maintains its own traditions, customs, and folk literature.

According to the territorial administrative division in accordance with the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 221/1996 Coll., the region is divided into 11 districts: Gelnica, Košice I, Košice II, Košice III, Košice IV, Košice-okolie, Michalovce, Rožňava, Sobrance, Spišská Nová Ves, and Trebišov. The smallest district, Košice III, has an area of 16.8 km², while the largest, Košice-Okolie, covers 1,534.6 km².

The region has 440 municipalities, 17 of which have town status. Nearly 53% of the region's population lives in towns. Košice is the administrative, economic, political, educational, and cultural centre of the region. It is the second-largest city in Slovakia, consisting of 22 city districts with their own local self-government. At the end of 2023, nearly 226 thous. residents lived in Košice, representing 29% of the regional population.

Demographic background

By the end of 2023, the population of the Košice Region was 779,073, making up 14.4% of the total population of Slovakia. The region is among the more densely populated regions, with an average of 115 people per square kilometer. The four districts within Košice city are densely populated, while the districts of Sobrance, Rožňava, and Gelnica are much less densely populated.

Although more people were born (7,908) than died (7,622) in 2023, the total population declined by 432 persons, due to a migration loss of 718 people. The natural population growth (286 people) was not enough to offset the migration losses. The region's population was relatively younger than the Slovak average, with the average age in 2023 being 40 years. Children under 14 accounted for 17.4%, the productive population (15–64 years) represented 65.5%, and seniors over 65 made up 17.1% of the population. The child component of the population has so far slightly outweighed the senior component.

Just 3,691 couples got married in 2023, while 993 divorced. The number of marriages decreased by 8% year-on-year, and was the third lowest since 2014 and surpassed only the Covid years 2020 and 2021. The number of divorces decreased by up to 12% year-on-year, and was the lowest in the last decade.

Economic and social specifics

Work opportunities in Košický kraj are mainly concentrated in the regional capital and its surroundings, while the more remote districts face a shortage of job opportunities. The

economically active, i.e. employed and unemployed over 15 year of age, made up 48% of the population in 2023. The economic activity rate, i.e. the ratio of economically active to the population over 15 years of age, reached 59.2% and the employment rate, which is the ratio of employed aged 20 to 64 to the entire population of the same age, was 71.1%. Among the regions, only in Košický kraj the unemployment rate increased year-on-year. It reached 9.9% and was the second highest after the Prešovský kraj. The average monthly wage reached 1,536 EUR and fell behind the national average by 92 EUR.

At the end of 2023, the region had 33.2 thous. registered legal entities, of which enterprises, i.e. organizations focused on profit-making, accounted for 85.6%. Enterprises focused their activities mainly on trade, professional, scientific and technical activities, as well as industry. There were also 40.3 thous. registered natural persons in Košický kraj, more than 91% of whom operated under the Trade Act. Self-employed persons operated mainly in construction, as well as in the trade and manufacturing.

The region accounted for 12.1% of Slovakia's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2023, making it one of the most important regions economically. The GDP amounted to 14.9 billion EUR. The industrial sector, particularly manufacturing (25.7%), had the largest share of the region's gross added value, followed by trade, transport, accommodation, and catering (17.7%).

Agricultural land covers 332 thous. hectares, which is almost half of the region's area. More than three-fifths of agricultural land is arable land, and a third consists of permanent grasslands. Over three-quarters of arable land is located in the districts of Košice – okolie, Michalovce, and Trebišov, where most of the agricultural production is concentrated. A rarity of the Košice region is the Tokaj wine region, where the unique Tokaj wine is cultivated and produced. Livestock farming is concentrated mainly around Košice.

The region's raw material base is the area of Slovenské Rudohorie mountains, which in ancient times contributed to the development of mining, non-ferrous metallurgy, and machinery. These sectors, along with the dominant position of modern metallurgical plants and chemical companies, form an important part of the industry. The main industrial sectors are metallurgy, machinery, food processing, electrical engineering, mining, production of building materials, fuel, and energy. In 2023, industrial enterprises in Košický kraj, most of which are based in the regional capital, employed 49.5 thous. person. Their turnover reached 11 bill. EUR.

Construction companies and firms in 2023 carried out by own employees construction production at level 837 mill. EUR, and construction production based on supply contracts reached 1,229.6 mill. EUR. In the region, 1,602 new apartments were completed. Residential construction was mainly located in the regional capital and its surroundings, where more than 70% of them were built.

In 2023, the total length of the road network in the region was 2,395 km, with motorways covering 22 km and expressways 15 km. There were 434 thous. motor vehicles registered in Košický kraj, three-quarters of which were passenger cars. International and national railway

routes include Žilina – Košice – Medzilaborce and Plaveč – Prešov – Košice. An important land port is the transshipment station in Čierna nad Tisou. An airport of international importance is located in Košice.

In 2023, 463 kindergartens, 293 primary schools, 34 grammar schools, 59 vocational secondary schools, and 4 conservatories provided education. Tertiary education is concentrated in Košice, where are 4 universities – the University of P. J. Šafárik, Technical University, University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy as well as the 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 also the seat in the city.

In 2023, healthcare in the region was provided by 1,910 healthcare facilities, including 19 hospitals, 1,505 outpatient healthcare units, and 14 institutes for treatment. Respiratory diseases were treated in the climatic spa of Štós.

In 2023, cultural performances and exhibitions were offered by 15 theatres, including small and independent ones, 8 permanent cinemas with 20 screening rooms, 27 museums, and 3 galleries. There were 126 libraries available to readers. Rich cultural and historical monuments include St. Elizabeth's Cathedral in Košice, the historic centre of Košice, the Betliar manor house, Krásna Hôrka castle, the Premonstratensian Abbey in Jasov, the Gothic Evangelical Church in Štítnik, and many other churches, which are part of the Gemer branch of the Gothic Route. Spiš Castle, Spišské Podhradie, the ecclesiastical town of Spišská Kapitula, the Gothic church in Žehra, and the wooden churches in Ruska Bystrá have been included in UNESCO World Heritage. The largest Zoo in Central Europe is located in the Košice.

Tourism in the region has very favourable conditions for development due to its natural beauty and cultural-historical monuments. In 2023, over 400 thous. visitors stayed in 454 accommodation facilities.