

**RAZGLEDI****POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMICAL DEVELOPMENT  
OF OSTRAVA REGION IN CZECH REPUBLIC**

AUTHOR

**Petr Šindler**

Title: Dr., Docent

Address: Department of social geography and regional development, Faculty of science, University of Ostrava,  
710 00 Ostrava 10, Hladnovská 9, Czech RepublicE-mail: [sindler@osu.cz](mailto:sindler@osu.cz), [petr.sindler@osu.cz](mailto:petr.sindler@osu.cz)

Telephone: +420 (0)69 624 10 82

Faks: +420 (0)69 624 10 82

UDC: 911.3(437.11/2)

COBISS: 1.02

ABSTRACT

**Political, social and economical development of Ostrava region in Czech republic**

The social and political changes in the Czech Republic after 1989 accelerated the manifestation of many other important development factors. One of them is undoubtedly the factor of region inhabitant employment rate. We must say that the pessimistic prognosis did not come true. The changes of the social and economic structure of the region are already quite remarkable. They became evident above all in the demographic structure, in the production and nonproduction spheres, in services and also in the quality of the environment.

KEY WORDS

economic transformation, regional development and policy, Czech-Polish border

IZVLEČEK

**Politični, socialni in ekonomski razvoj Ostravske regije na Češkem**

Socialne in politične spremembe na Češkem po letu 1989 so sprožile številne razvojne dejavnike, pri čemer je treba ugotoviti, da se pesimistične napovedi niso povsem potrdile. Socialne in ekonomske spremembe v regiji so znatne; zlasti v demografski strukturi, v proizvodni in neproizvodni sferi, v storitvah ter seveda v kvaliteti okolja.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

ekonomska preobrazba, regionalni razvoj, češko-poljska meja

## 1. Basic geographic characteristics of the region

The Czech-Polish border area in the region of North Moravia and Czech Silesia consists of 6 districts. The seventh, new established district of Jeseník was created by detachment from the part of the district of Šumperk and Bruntál 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1996. Considering the data basis we will provide data for 6 original districts, it means without the district of Jeseník, but with the original extent of the district of Šumperk and Bruntál.

## 2. Geopolitical and geostrategic location of the region

The »internal« neighbours of the Czech-Polish border region are districts of former regions of East Bohemia and North Moravia. Its »external« (state) border separate this region from the state territory of Poland and Slovakia.

*Table 1: Basic data on the Czech-Polish border region, 1992 (Koloch, Wieczorek 1995).*

Indicator	Šumperk District	Bruntál District	Opava District	Ostrava District	Karviná District	Frýdek-Místek District	Total
Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	1948	1745	1144	214	347	1273	6671
Area percentage CR territory in (%)	2,5	2,2	1,4	0,3	0,4	1,6	8,4
Number of population (ths)	165,2	110,5	182,0	326,2	285,9	229,2	1299,0
Density of population (pers./km <sup>2</sup> )	85	63	159	1528	824	180	194
Percentage of population of pre-productive age (%)	20,6	21,8	20,7	19,5	20,6	20,3	20,6
Percentage of population of productive age (%)	61,0	62,0	60,7	61,8	61,8	60,4	61,3
Percentage of population of post-productive age (%)	18,4	16,2	18,6	18,7	17,6	19,3	18,1
Natural rise in population per one thousand people	1,7	5,7	2,0	-2,5	0,9	2,7	2,2

From geopolitical point of view we can assess the location of this region as advantageous. The function of the historical old border with the Poland, except several short periods in the past, was rather contacting than barrier. Also the adjoin main centres of the border regions on the Czech (Ostrava) and Polish sides (Opole, Katowice, Bielsko-Biala) form advantage for the further development and co-operation. The young state border of the border region with the Slovakia does not represent the considerable geopolitical watershed and also does not yet play any considerable role of the factor of the potential development.

There is some (but we believe that timely limited) geopolitical and geostrategic disadvantage of this border region and it is the present impossibility to establish the common Czech-Polish Euroregion Silesia.

The fact that neither the Czech Republic nor Poland are the member of the European Union and border on any member country of the European Union represents the obstacle.

From this point of view the fact that the distance of the Czech part of the Czech-Polish border region of North Moravia and Czech Silesia from the important centres of the European Union regions is the same 1000 km (from Ostrava to Brussels, Stockholm and Rome) can be interesting and on the contrary the distances from the important centres of border Polish and Slovak regions are: Ostrava–Opole 105 km, Ostrava–Katowice 75 km, Ostrava–Bielsko-Biala 60 km; Ostrava–Bratislava 210 km, and Ostrava–Bánská Bystrica 140 km.

The other advantage of the location of this border Czech-Polish region is the fact that both border states are the members of CEFTA aiming at entering the European Union and going through the transformation stage of the market economy development. All strengths and some weaknesses of the transformation policy are common for all mentioned regions.

### 3. Factor of unemployment rate of the population

Social and political changes within the Czech Republic after 1989 accelerated the performance of other important development factors. One of them is without any doubt the factor of the unemployment rate of the population of Czech-Polish border region.

For understanding the regional peculiarities of the unemployment factor is necessary to explain the situation within the whole Czech Republic. According to analysis of the regional unemployment situation the districts of the Czech Republic can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of regions with the higher demand for workforce than the offer. The second group consists of districts which, in spite of it that their number of unemployed is higher than that of available working opportunities, can be qualified as not so important (only up to one thousand of job seekers within the districts). The third group consists of districts with lack of more than one thousand of openings for their all job seekers but where the unemployment can be taken as important social factor. There are also districts, with economic development giving them probably no chance to solve the unemployment problem by their Employment Agency (today the number of unemployed is about three thousand higher than that of openings within the district with the average number of 60,000 of economically active population) without the external intervention (special government measures for creation of new jobs, etc.)

Present fall and division of the unemployment rate shows that with the exception of several districts of the North Bohemia region and part of the North Moravia region we cannot speak from the social point of view more seriously about the problem of unemployment. In Prague, in five districts of the Central Bohemian regions, in five districts of South Bohemian, five districts of West Bohemian and five districts of East Bohemian region the number of openings is higher than that of job seekers. In the group with the worst outlook to get the job can be included districts of Most (difference between the openings and number of unemployed is 2328, the unemployment rate is 7.7%), Louny (2911, 7.7%) and Karviná (6941, 6.9%).

The statistic data on the unemployment within the Czech-Polish border region of North Moravia and Czech Silesia answer the national situation. But the data of number of people in productive age are very negative. From 77 districts of the Czech Republic the highest unemployment rate is in districts of Louny and Most (7.7%). The higher unemployment rate than 6.0% was in the region of the North Moravia and Czech Silesia in districts of Karviná (6.9%) and Bruntál (6.2%).

How this factor manifested itself in different subregions (table 2)? Generally highest unemployment rate within the Czech Republic was evident at the beginning of 1992 in Šumperk district (9.2%). In December of the same year it fell down to 5.6%. About 2880 people looked for job in Šumperk district (4.5%) according to data from February 1996.

Table 2: Labour market in the Czech-Polish border region to 31 of December 1992 or to 31 of March 1996 (Koloch, Wiczorek 1995).

Indicator	Šumperk District	Bruntál District	Opava District	Ostrava District	Karviná District	Frýdek-Místek District	Total
Number of population of active age							
1992	82,550	54,624	70,806	215,863	128,783	104,327	656,893
1996	81,446	50,190	86,480	156,411	125,213	105,829	605,569
Number of unemployed persons							
1992	4,601	3,275	2,729	6,316	5,451	3,538	25,910
1996	4,399	3,163	3,159	7,843	9,125	4,579	32,264
% of unemployed persons							
1992	5.6	6.0	3.9	2.9	4.2	3.4	4.5
1996	5.7	4.9	3.5	4.8	6.8	4.2	5.0
Vacancies							
1992	765	211	754	1,983	1,889	740	1,057
1996	1,835	699	1,025	2,861	1,809	1,249	1,579

Nevertheless the Šumperk Employment Agency offers at present 1088 openings (including 953 for blue collars). Ups and downs in unemployed number are given by high number of people employed at seasonal jobs, namely in forestry and building construction.

In the Bruntál district there is few working opportunities for women (1697 women is looking for a job), workers (2480 job seekers) and for handicapped people (531). The worst situation is within the areas of Vidnava (13.0% of unemployed), Osoblaha (11.6%) and Moravský Beroun (10.1%). The lowest unemployment is in Krnov area (3.8%). At present about 200 foreigners, work in the district, mostly of Poland.

The general employment grows up in the district of Opava thanks to new work opportunities in the industry and building industry. The demand for work force takes place also in agriculture. The interested phenomena is a conclusion of large number of job contracts for finite period. The most openings offers Opava city (80 to 90%), about 10 to 15% Hlučín town and only 1% Vítkov. 26,603 unemployed have been registered in Ostrava city in 1995. 18,793 of them have been put out of registration, 12,097 of them have found their place at the labour market. It is expected that in 1996 the unemployment rate will range between 4.8 to 5.3% and a number of job seekers will not exceed 8800 people.

Also a number of vacancies grew up a little, so for one vacancy there are now three job seekers. But the disproportion between openings and qualification grows up. At the end of 1995 there worked 1077 foreigners in the city.

Karviná district is ranked by its unemployment rate (6.8%) among the front place in the Czech Republic. The most job seekers are in Karviná (3003) and Havířov (2465), the lowest number of unemployed is in Bohumín (970) and Český Tišín (894). The most often look for a job women of worker professions. There is at the present 1809 vacancies (miners, dressmakers, welders, masons) within the district.

The unemployment rate in the district of Frýdek-Místek started flow down step by step in 1995 and at the present it is at the level about 4%. About 11,500. of economically active people asked every year for job provision.

At the end we can say that the present system of the social insurance does not motivate the unemployed to look actively for the possibilities of some jobs. The number of the people in working age falls down but the openings offer grows up. And so, the pessimistic prognosis of the unemployment devel-

opment in the Czech Republic and its regions did not come true. In spring 1993 the London Institute of Adam Smith declared, apart of other things, that about 30 to 80% enterprises in the Czech Republic become bankrupt and as a result of it the unemployment rate could reach 40% and it would mean the creation of the army of two million of unemployed. But in reality, at the end of 1992 there were in the Czech Republic only about 133,000 of unemployed.

#### 4. Factor of foreign working force

The significant part of the foreign work force within the region are Poles and Slovaks. In 1990 the number of Poles working in the Czech Republic reached 54,800. After it a significant decline took part. At the end of 1991 there were occupied in the Czech Republic only 16,800. In 1993 there were issued working permits to 10,600 of Poles, in 1994 to 8,700 and in 1995 to 10,300 of Poles. The more detail statistics of occupation of Poles within the Czech-Polish border region was not accessible during the preparation of this paper. And so we can only say that besides the building industry the Poles work mostly in coal mines. Ostrava-Karvina coal mines give at present work to more than 1800 people of Poland in districts of Ostrava-city, Karviná and Frýdek-Místek.

There is also a long history with the occupation of Slovak people in the Czech Republic. There are available large statistical surveys from the year of 1961. Within 1961 to 1991 the number of Slovak people working in the Czech Republic went continually down (from 88.2% in 1961 to 30.0% in 1991).

There were significant regional differences in the commuting directions from the Slovakia to the Czech Republic. Workers from Central and Eastern Slovak regions have found their jobs above all in the North Moravia region. Most important Slovak districts participated in the commuting to the Czech Republic are districts of Čadca (7166 people), Senica (2591), Žilina (2100), Poprad (1287), Povážská Bystrica (1219), Spišská Nová Ves (1087) and Dolný Kubín (1076). The most numerous groups of Slovaks commuted to districts of Ostrava-city (4392), Karviná (3297) and Frýdek-Místek (2940) where the most were occupied at heavy industry (mines, metallurgical works).

Based on the number of economically active people, people commuting and going for work we can set the number of working people in the given territory. For different districts of the Czech Republic can be given the portion of commuting from Slovakia in general number of jobs. According to this criteria in 1991 took place the highest percentage of commuting from Slovakia in the districts of Frýdek-Místek (2.74%), Karviná (2.48%) and Ostrava-city (1.97%).

From the regional point of view the most Slovak people worked at the middle of 1995 at Ostrava (5905 people, i. e. 6.3%), in districts of Karviná (3315, 6.3%) and Frýdek-Místek (3136, 5.9%). Nearly 90% of them were men. Three mentioned districts have the second highest employment of Slovak people (11,356 people) within the whole Czech Republic. At the first place is traditionally Prague (11,576), behind the region of North Moravia and Czech Silesia follow districts of Brno-city (3157), Hodonín (1386), Zlín (1394), Vsetín (1081), Pilsen-city (995) and Pardubice (951).

#### 5. Changes of the economic and social structure

The changes of the social and economic structure of the region are already quite marked. Above all, they took place in demographic structure, production and non-production spheres and also in the quality of environment.

The Czech-Polish border region of North Moravia and Czech Silesia was populated in 1992 by about 1.3 mil. of population. There is the high density of population (in average 200 people per 1 km<sup>2</sup>) with the maximum in Karviná district (824) and Ostrava city (1528) and urbanization. This situation is in decisively way effected by the concentration of population in Ostrava-Karvina agglomeration, the sec-

ond largest in the Czech Republic. Some specific features of the region exist in settlement structure and size of cities. There are 15 towns with more than 10 ths. of population (Ostrava, 2 towns in every of following districts Bruntál, Opava and Frýdek-Místek, 3 in districts of Šumperk and 5 in district of Karviná). More than 100,000 people have only the main region centre Ostrava. In the size category of cities from 10,000 to 20,000 people there are 4 cities, from 20,000 to 50,000 people 6 cities and from 50,000 to 100,000 people 4 cities.

There is about 62% of people at working age in this region, the difference between the number of people at pre-working age and in post-working age is minimum (20.6% or 18.1%).

*Table 3: Economicaly active population of the Czech-Polish border region, state to 1991 (Koloch, Wiczorek 1995).*

Indicator	Šumperk District	Bruntál District	Opava District	Ostrava District	Karviná District	Frýdek-Místek District	Total
Workers in all	85,700	57,100	92,500	172,000	143,000	114,000	664,300
Sector I (%)	14.1	16.5	14.0	1.8	3.0	8.6	7.8
Sector II (%)	42.5	36.7	36.8	43.7	49.5	50.0	44.3
Sector III (%)	43.4	46.8	49.2	54.5	47.5	41.4	47.9

The heavy industry (coal mining, metallurgy, chemistry) still dominates it is only followed by the machinery and light industry within the Czech-Polish border region. 44% of economically active population worked in industry with the maximum in Ostrava (50%) and minimum in Bruntál district (36.7%) in 1992. More significant structural change is the decline of the coal mining in Ostrava and its expecting limitation in Karvina part of Ostrava-Karviná coal basin. About 48% of economically active population of the region have been employed in services with the highest portion in Ostrava district (54.5%) and the lowest in Frýdek-Místek district (41.4%).

*Table 4: Environment in the Czech-Polish border region, state to 1992 (Koloch, Wiczorek 1995).*

Indicator	Šumperk District	Bruntál District	Opava District	Ostrava District	Karviná District	Frýdek-Místek District	Total
Waste water treatment plants	7	11	7	3	8	10	46
SO <sub>2</sub> emission (t/year)	5,100	3,620	3,920	39,750	37,240	15,670	105,300
NO <sub>x</sub> emission (t/year)	1,160	1,000	970	34,750	21,310	16,230	75,420
CO emission (t/year)	420	530	600	136,550	6,130	97,450	241,680

Data in the table 4 show the environmental situation of the Czech-Polish border region.

We can see that there operate 46 waste water treatment plants in the region and many of others are under construction. But their existing location does not always correspond to the territorial environmental loading (e. g. there are 3 in Ostrava but 11 in Bruntál district) But from the methodical point of view we have to say that we are speaking about absolute data which give us no information on the waste water treatment plants capacities, on the volume of treated waste water neither on the territory from which the waste water are treated.

Alarming remains the situation relating to the gas emissions of SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub> and CO. The most loaded subregion is in all these cases Ostrava city, following by districts of Karviná and Frýdek-Místek. Of course, it corresponds to the existing location of the industry which is the largest air pollution maker, but alarming is the situation when the sum of the value in mentioned, the most loaded districts, exceeds the sum of all values of the rest of the districts within the region.

## 6. Conclusion

The temporary development and co-operation in the Czech-Polish border region of the North Moravia and Czech Silesia show that even in the future can be the regional and local levels at the trans-border co-operation the practical manual of the integration processes.

As a strength can be also taken a fact that between the Czech Republic and Poland has been already concluded the agreement of the transborder co-operation (but up to now the Czech Republic has similar agreements neither with Germany nor with Austria or Slovakia). It can be also expected that after the clarification of ideas of new administrative division of the state, both in Poland and in the Czech Republic, and after its implementation, the level of the transborder co-operation can grow up significantly. It looks that also the common participation of both sides in the implementation of mutual transborder projects (namely PHARE-CBS) is more than only desirable.

Right at the end I can express the satisfaction with it that also contacts of the universities and science and research institutes in the border regions of the Czech-Polish border region are at very good and promising level. This international conference, the organisers of which are University in Lodz, Silesian Science Institute Opole and Ostrava University, is a proof of it. The development of the co-operation in solving common problems of Czech-Polish border region between the Silesian Science Institute in Opole and Department of social geography and regional development of the Faculty of Science of Ostrava University continues also second year. Much more older is the co-operation of Ostrava University with the Silesian University in Katowice.

## 7. Bibliography

- Bujak, M. 1995: Miedzynarodowa konferencja o współpracy transgranicznej w Republice Czeskiej. Biuletyn pogranicza polsko-czeskiego 4.
- Česko-polské pohraničí. Terplan, Prague, 1994.
- Indikatory trhu práce. Kariéra. Annex to the Hospodářské noviny, 1996, 26, 24<sup>th</sup> of Jun.
- Koloch, B., Wieczorek, W. 1995: Monitoring pogranicza polsko-czeskiego. Biuletyn pogranicza polsko-czeskiego 5.
- Koordinální studie rozvoje česko-polského pohraničí. CUP BPR, Katowice, 1993.
- Nezaměstnanost: pesimistické prognózy se nesplnily. Moravsko slezský den 7, 1996, 96, 23<sup>rd</sup> of April.
- Vicherek, P., Toušek, V. 1996: Dojíždka za prací přes státní hranici České republiky. Brno.

## 8. Povzetek: Politični, socialni in ekonomski razvoj Ostravske regije na Češkem

(prevedel Mirko Pak)

Območje ob česko-poljski meji je bilo v preteklosti, razen krajšega obdobja, stalno odprto za čezmejne tokove in sodelovanje. Ker je tudi Slovaška zelo blizu, je to potencialno območje tesnega sodelovanja držav CEFTE in v prihodnje tudi držav Evropske zveze. Sodelovanje med manjšimi češkimi in polj-

skimi območji je dober primer čezmejnega sodelovanja, ki nakazuje integracijske procese. V to se vključuje tudi sodelovanje med več univerzami v tem območju.

Posledice političnih in gospodarskih sprememb leta 1989 so območje ob češko-poljski meji močno prizadele, kar se kaže v prestrukturiranju industrije in spremljajočih pojavih. Med njimi še posebej izstopa nezaposlenost, ki pa ne dosega pesimističnih napovedi in je s 7 do 10 % po posameznih območjih nižja kot drugod na Češkem.

Precejšnje so tudi spremembe v socialni sestavi prebivalstva tega drugega najgosteje poseljenega območja Češke. Kar 44 % aktivnega prebivalstva dela v industriji, pri čemer se je še najmočneje zmanjšal delež zaposlenih v rudarstvu, v industriji pa le neznatno; oboje zaradi rasti zaposlenih v storitvenih dejavnostih, katerih delež se je že povzpел na 48 %.

Okolje je v še vedno izrazito industrijskem območju seveda močno degradirano; še posebej onesnažene so vode, na onesnaženost zraka pa najbolj vplivajo še vedno visoke emisije SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub> in CO.