

The country population trend in the selected region of the Czech Republic

Populační vývoj na venkově ve vybraném regionu České republiky

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Abstract: There are 80% municipalities under one thousand inhabitants in the Czech Republic. The population trend observed in the region of South Bohemia has proved a long-term and graduated depopulation of such small municipalities. While population has fallen in municipalities under one thousand inhabitants, towns and municipalities with more than one thousand inhabitants show the opposite trend. The possibility of changing this trend seems to lay in the state help for small municipalities parallel with the expected change of the situation after the EU accession because it is very probable, that many young families will be looking for the financially more convenient living in the country.

Key words: district, municipality, population, region, trend

Abstrakt: V České republice je 80 % obcí s počtem obyvatel menším než tisíc. Vývoj populace sledovaný v regionu Jihočeského kraje vykazuje dlouhodobý a postupný úbytek obyvatelstva v takto malých obcích. Zatímco v municipalitách menších než tisíc obyvatel populace ubývá, města a obce s tisíci a více obyvateli vykazují opačný trend. Možnost změny tohoto vývoje se rýsuje v podobě státní pomoci malým obcím paralelně s nastoupivší změnou situace v naší zemi po vstupu do Evropské unie, kdy většina rodin bude hledat finančně příznivější bydlení na venkově.

Klíčová slova: okresy, obce, populace, region, vývoj

INTRODUCTION

By January 1, 1998, there were living 2.9 million inhabitants in the municipalities without the town status in the Czech Republic, i.e. 29% of total population. The lowest margin for establishing an independent municipality has been 300 inhabitants since 1998 (according to law) and the lower limit of 3 000 inhabitants has been determined for granting the town status. Many towns do not fulfill these criteria. That is why it is thought more convenient for the rural area specification to use the population density indicator.

Štřeleček et al. (2000) mention that for the purposes of international comparison of rural conditions, the OECD defined rural areas issuing from two hierarchical levels of territorial units: local and regional. At the local level, rural area is defined for NUTS V – rural municipalities with the population density lower than 100 persons per 1 square kilometer. The regional level is based on NUTS III, for which the OECD classifies larger functional or administrative units according to level of the so-called “rurality”. That is defined as the share of population living in the rural municipalities to the total population in the region.

From the point of view of population share in rural municipalities, the Czech Republic is at the ninth position behind the following countries: Sweden (66.8%), Finland (50.6%), Ireland (43.1%), Austria (34.6%), Denmark

(32.4%), Greece (30.8%), Spain (24.4%) and France (23.7%). From the total number of 6 243 municipalities, there were 4 995 municipalities in rural areas in the Czech Republic, i.e. 80% by January 1, 1998. From the total population of 10 289 621 persons in the Czech Republic, there were 2 299 093 inhabitants living in the rural municipalities, i.e. 22.3% at 75% area of the state (MRD 1999).

RESOURCES AND METHODS

Rural areas of the CR show a reduced economic and demographic activity. It has been reflected in the reduction of the population number and the decrease of job opportunities. The most numerous (80%) are the municipalities under 1 000 inhabitants in the Czech Republic.

The above mentioned development can be demonstrated on the population number observation in the concrete region surroundings. It is advisable to make the choice of the followed region from several points of view, where the demographic, social and economic ones are namely important.

The lowest population density is shown in the South Bohemia region (62 inhabitants per 1 square kilometre), therefore this region was chosen for the further observation. The South Bohemia region has got seven districts in total, four of which are the border regions showing a specific trend from the population viewpoint. According

to my opinion, a relative stable and typical trend in municipalities, applicable to the majority of districts in the Czech Republic, is seen in the inland-districts of South Bohemia region.

In the frame of this region, there were followed municipalities under 1 000 inhabitants in the inland of the South Bohemian region, i.e. the districts Písek, Strakonice, Tábor. The boarder districts were not included, because Kareš (1991) has dealt with it in detail.

To analyse the situation in municipalities under 1 000 inhabitants, the following indicators were determined:

- population in the municipalities up to 999 and with 1 000+ inhabitants, with the classification of inland districts of the South Bohemia region,
- population density in the followed districts,
- migration by moving recalculated per 1 000 inhabitants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the comparison of population development in municipalities up to 999 inhabitants in the selected districts. Population density is counted for the whole district per 1 km². Migration rates for the period 1930–1991 is not included because of the data not being available, for the period 1992–1999 it is re-calculated per 1 000 inhabitants in absolute numbers.

From above mentioned data, it is evident that the year 1980 was very specific regarding the population development in municipalities. The effect of municipalities categorisation performed in 1972 was reflected here. The determined limit for the population counts in municipalities was 999 inhabitants. The so-called central municipalities included a different number of municipalities.

Table 1. The demographic trend in municipalities under 1000 inhabitants in selected regions in the years 1930–1991

Number of inhabitants	1930	1950	1961	1970	1980	1991
District Písek	38,714	30,372	29,282	25, 542	27,327	18,788
District Strakonice	40,813	31,480	31,043	26,936	23,477	23,199
District Tábor	43,079	33,070	33,634	29,250	23,332	25,568

Source: own calculations from data of the Czech Statistical Office

Table 2. The demographic development in municipalities with 1000+ inhabitants in the selected regions from 1930 to 1991

Number of inhabitants	1930	1950	1961	1970	1980	1991
District Písek	44,678	41,458	44,472	47,291	44,915	53,286
District Strakonice	40,784	37,342	40,149	42,483	48,521	48,779
District Tábor	52,240	56,186	62,530	67,423	79,912	78,462

Source: own calculations from the data of the Czech Statistical Office

Table 3. The population density in the selected districts in the years 1930–1991

Population density in district		1930	1950	1961	1970	1980	1991
Písek	total	73	63	65	64	63	63
	municipalities with 1 000+ inhabitants	243	225	242	257	140	290
	municipalities under 1 000 inhabitants	41	32	31	27	33	20
Strakonice	total	79	67	69	67	70	70
	municipalities with 1 000+ inhabitants	205	188	202	213	92	245
	municipalities under 1 000 inhabitants	49	38	37	32	47	28
Tábor	total	72	67	72	73	78	78
	municipalities with 1 000+ inhabitants	257	277	308	332	119	387
	municipalities under 1 000 inhabitants	38	29	30	26	36	23

Source: own calculations from the data of the Czech Statistical Office

Table 4. The population development in with 1000+ inhabitants and under 1 000 inhabitants in the selected regions in the years 1992–1999

Year	Inhabitants in municipalities	District					
		Písek		Strakonice		Tábor	
		number	population density	number	population density	number	population density
1992	total	71 368	63	71 529	69	103 846	80
	1000+ inhabitants	53 193	289	46 907	236	76 068	375
	under 1 000 inhabitants	18 175	19	24 622	30	27 778	25
	migration/1000 inhabitants	–3.9	–1.8	–0.2			
1993	total	71 159	63	71 361	69	103 897	78
	1000+ inhabitants	52 259	284	47 619	239	76 972	379
	under 1 000 inhabitants	18 900	20	23 742	29	26 925	24
	migration/1000 inhabitants	–2.1	–0.8	–0.1			
1994	total	71 019	62	71 099	69	103 882	78
	1000+ inhabitants a	53 323	290	47 445	238	79 319	391
	under 1 000 inhabitants	17 696	19	23 742	29	24 563	22
	migration/1000 inhabitants	0.3	–1.5	0.5			
1995	total	70 850	62	70 795	69	103 588	78
	1000+ inhabitants	53 337	290	47 250	237	79 183	390
	under 1 000 inhabitants	17 513	18	23 545	28	24 405	22
	migration/1000 inhabitants	0.2	–0.3	0.5			
1996	total	70 699	62	70 646	68	103 347	78
	1000+ inhabitants a	52 400	285	47 254	238	79 112	390
	under 1 000 inhabitants	18 299	19	23 392	28	24 235	22
	migration/1000 inhabitants	0.7	–0.2	0.5			
1997	total	70 681	62	70 453	68	103 159	78
	1000+ inhabitants	52 451	285	47 217	237	79 020	389
	under 1 000 inhabitants	18 230	19	23 236	28	24 139	22
	migration/1000 inhabitants	2.6	0.4	0.6			
1998	total	70 570	62	70 199	68	103 200	78
	1000+ inhabitants	52 450	285	47 103	236	79 112	390
	under 1 000 inhabitants	18 120	19	23 096	28	24 088	21
	migration/1000 inhabitants.	0.1	1.0	2.0			
1999	total	70 406	62	70 013	68	103 174	78
	1000+ inhabitants	52 458	285	47 006	236	79 074	390
	under 1 000 inhabitants	17 948	19	23 007	28	24 100	21
	migration/1000 inhabitants	0.1	0.7	1.1			

Source: own calculations from the data of the Czech Statistical Office

That is why the data from 1980 are not accurate from the population trend point of view.

Globally, it is possible to observe a continuous decrease of population in municipalities under 1 000 inhabitants, what can be seen also in the corrected population density.

Table 2 demonstrates the population growth in municipalities with 1000+ inhabitants in the districts Tábor and Strakonice and, on the contrary, a considerable decrease in district Písek in 1980s (compared with 1970). Generally, it can be therefore stated that with the decrease of inhabitants in small villages, there was observed the growth of population in municipalities with 1 + inhabitants.

It results from above data, that the population has grown in the municipalities with 1 000+ inhabitants and on the contrary: inhabitants number in municipalities under 1 000 has decreased during the followed period 1930–1991. The mentioned trend has not changed by the attempt to solve this problem through the rural municipalities categorisation 1972, either.

The total area of the district Písek is 1 138 km², of the district Strakonice 1 032 km², of the district Tábor 1 327 km². Municipalities under 1 000 inhabitants occupy the area (according to the land register): in the district Písek 954 km², in the district Strakonice 833 km², in the district Tábor 1 124 km². Population density was counted from these data in 1930–1991. Table 3 shows the observed data.

The trend of population decrease in municipalities under 1 000 inhabitants has been marked in all researched districts during the followed period 1930–1991.

Table 4 introduces the results counted on the base of the population number in municipalities under 1 000 inhabitants during 1992–1999.

According to the above data based on the CSO data, it can be stated that the continuing decrease of population is seen in the rural areas and in municipalities under 1 000 inhabitants. The identified demographic trend is reflected in the municipalities with 1 000+ inhabitants, where the population increase either stagnated or slightly increased during the followed period.

It is possible to pose a question after the presentation of above-mentioned data, whether the small villages have a future as a primary settlement at the continuous decrease of population number. The answer is not unambiguous, because sustainable development is one of the main features performed by the regional policy of the EU. However, it is very probable that just this feature of regional policy will slow down or even change the decrease of population into slightly positive values.

CONCLUSION

The 10 061 km² area of the South Bohemia region is covered by rural areas from 9 048 km², i.e. 90% of the area. There are 580 rural municipalities, i.e. 93,1% of the total 623 municipalities in the region of South Bohemia. In the South Bohemia region, 626 570 inhabitants are living and 260 406 of this number, i.e. 42%, are living in the rural area. Notwithstanding the documented continuous population decrease in rural municipalities, it is necessary to support these areas and to solve the negative population trend. The reasons are not only the priorities of regional policy, but it is also the question of financial securities of rural population who in majority have got their houses built in their village and their incomes do not enable them to procure housing in a town. Many of them are bound to the domicile in the country by employment in agriculture and personal alliance with the village itself. However, it is not only because of the population, which it is necessary to sustain in rural areas, but it is also the need of preserving the cultural and historical

heritage of the country, landscape protection and its maintenance, sustaining the advantage of synergy between urban and rural area and other reasons coming out of the principles of regional policy.

There exists an assumption, that the state help to rural municipalities through subsidy programmes and supporting the living standard of population increase in small villages will make it possible to stop the negative demographic trend and will change it into a positive one in the future. The cause of this trend will not be only the mentioned state help to small municipalities but also the financial and social situation of population in the Czech Republic, that will reflect market conditions after the EU accession – social differences will deepen and most of Czech families will be looking for a more cost-saving ways of housing, which generally forms the majority of the domestic budget expenditures.

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