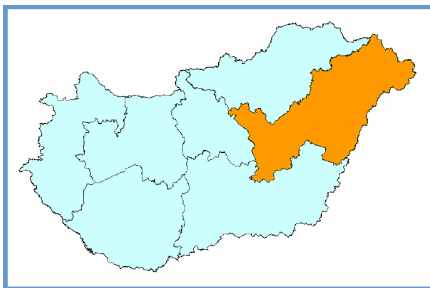


Észak-Alföld Region, Hungary

1. Key data

Észak-Alföld		
Area	17 728,8	(km ²)
Population	1 533 162	(persons)
Population density	86,47	(persons/ km ²)
GDP (2004)	8233,3	(millions of euro)
GDP/capita (2004)	5331	(euro per inhabitant)
Employment rate (2006)	51,1	(%)
Unemployment rate (2006)	9,4	(%)
Activity rate (2006)	57,4	(%)

2. Location, geography¹



Észak-Alföld, comprising **three counties** (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Hajdú-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg), is bordered by Romania and the Ukraine from the east, by the River Tisza from the north and by Hungarian counties from the south.

The monotony of its **plains** is disrupted by **saliferous and freshwater lakes**, dead channels surrounded by reeds, acacia trees and the blue ribbons of rivers flowing into the Tisza. Its territory covers nearly half of the Hungarian Great Plain, with an area of almost 17 729 square kilometres.

3. Accessibility and transport infrastructure

Due to its geographical location, the Észak-Alföld Region could play a **key role in freight transport logistics**. The size, economic activity, transport infrastructure and geographical location of the country taken into consideration,

- a network of 11 logistics districts and
- 13 national logistics centres has been delineated;
- of the latter, 3 (Záhony, Debrecen and Szolnok) are in the region.

Routes:

- several TEN routes cross the region.
- new motorway sections (M3)
- Main Road no. 4

Cycle lanes of 6 national networks

Rail links: above the national average; as regards the general physical condition of the rails, special duality can be identified.

Airport in Debrecen has the potential of a future transit airport handling both passenger and cargo traffic.

¹ Source: The North Great Plain Operational Programme, 2007-2013

4. Population, human resources

4.1 Population

- population fell between 2001 and 2005;
- reasons: demographic processes+ negative migration balance
- population has increased are in the vicinity of Debrecen, Nyíregyháza and Szolnok
- youngest age composition

4.2 Training and education

- drop in the number of primary school students
 - In terms of quantity indicators (number of classrooms, number of students in a class, the teacher-to-student ratio) differences between the individual schools are not material;
 - standard is lower in smaller settlements
- secondary level education: transformation - grammar school and secondary modern school -> the region now faces a shortage of skilled workers,
- higher education:
 - Debrecen is a major and dynamically developing university centre of not only the Region, but also the country.
 - while college-level education is available in Nyíregyháza, Szolnok, Hajdúböszörmény, Jászberény and Mezőtúr.

4.3 Employment, unemployment

- employment:
 - growth for a long time
 - fall between 2003 and 2005,
 - followed by an increase in 2006
 - major weakness: low within the 15-74 age group
- unemployment: the Region ranks 6th in Hungary
- high proportion of the economically inactive

5. Economy, businesses

5.1 Key features of the economy

- Gross Domestic Product per capita
 - EUR 5 331 in 2004
- Gross Value Added
 - 10.2% of the country, a share which is constant over the years
 - primary sector 8.6%
 - secondary 31.6%
 - tertiary 59.8%

5.2 Industry

- significant development in the Észak-Alföld Region between 2000 and 2005:
- As regards the distribution of industrial employees, regional figures exceeded their national counterparts in the following sectors:
 - o the manufacture of textiles and textile goods,
 - o leather goods,
 - o footwear,
 - o foods,
 - o beverages,
 - o tobacco,
 - wooden and paper product and printing.
- Within the region the following sectors play a more significant role than elsewhere in the country.
 - o **Hajdú-Bihar County:** chemical industry and mining, electricity, gas, steam and water supply;

- **Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County:** textile and food industries, unprocessed metal, manufacture of processed metal products and machinery;
- **Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County:** foods, beverages, tobacco and chemical industry.

- Industrial parks

5.3 Services

- privatisation - commercial supply network grew
- 11.4% of all employees worked in commerce

5.4 Agriculture

- key strategic area: 21.7% of the country's agricultural land is in this region
- natural heritage/attributes and expertise
- basis for an innovative and competitive agrarian economy.
- absence of a physical infrastructure needed for efficient business management,
- logistic systems that lag behind in terms of quantity and quality,
- the deficiencies or the inadequate standard of quality assurance, agrarian innovation and marketing in several areas

5.5 Tourism

- rich in tourist attractions
- thermal and curative waters
- relics
- protected habitats
- Horses and riding

5.6 Research and Technological Development

- Research and development, which is mostly closely related to higher education, is one of the strengths of Észak-Alföld Region –at least in Hungarian context.
- The importance of research and development is also reflected in the Regional Innovation Strategy (RIS), identifying three main focus areas for RTD activities: ICT, agriculture and health.

Észak-Alföld –

It is the less developed region of the four partners, sharing some of the challenges while also exhibiting problems that are only present here.

With regard to the economy, the major problem facing the region is the very low level of endogenous development building on the major key strengths of the region.

Even though the region has significant higher education capacities and up-to-date facilities, the higher education institutions have very limited relations with the businesses in the region. Although the INNOVA Regional Innovation Agency promotes innovation and acts as an intermediary agency, the infrastructure of R&D and technology transfer is still fairly limited in the region.

In addition to its economic challenges, there is large number of underdeveloped areas in the region, where most of the people live under the poverty limit.

Although the environmental quality of the region is fairly good, energy efficiency and the efficient use of renewable energy sources (including thermal water, being a major resource in the region), and risk prevention (significant parts of the region are exposed to floods) are important areas the region has a lot to do.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Észak-Alföld is not an administrative region: it has very limited competences even in the field of development policy, and, most importantly, it does not have its own budget and funds.