



# Region of Thessaly / Greece

## I. Natural and Demographic Characteristics

The Region of Thessaly occupies the central eastern part of continental Greece. It borders on the north with the regions of West and Central Macedonia, on the south with the region of Sterea Ellada, on the west with the Region of Ipiros and on the east with the Aegean Sea. 36% of the land is flat, 17.1% is semi-mountainous while the remaining 44.9% is mountainous.



Its territory of 14,036 square kilometers is characterised by a highly variable landscape, possessing some of the most fertile agricultural plains in the country, surrounded by tall mountains and with an island complex in its eastern outmost administrative boundaries.

The population of the region of Thessaly is 753,888 and represents 6.9% of the total population of the country, from which 44% is urban, 40% agrarian and 16% semi-urban. Larissa, the capital of Thessaly, is home to more than 200,000 people.

## II. History and Culture

Thessaly is tied down with a significant part of Greek history and mythology. Mount Olympus was the mythical home of the 12 Olympian Gods while, according to legend, Jason and the Argonauts launched their search for the Golden Fleece from the Magnesia Peninsula.



Significant researchers claim that the region has been inhabited since the tenth millennium before Christ and that it was home to an extensive Neolithic culture around 2500 BC.

Settlements of the Mycenaeans have also been discovered in Iolcos, Dimini and Sesklo while in the Archaic and Classical times the lowlands of Thessalia became home to baronial families. The region was annexed in Byzantine Empire in 7<sup>th</sup> century AD and was later on successively invaded by the Bulgarians (10<sup>th</sup> century) and the Normans (11<sup>th</sup>). In the 13<sup>th</sup> century it was conquered by the Ottomans and was only liberated and attached to the newborn Greek state at 1881.

Nowadays, Thessalia has a significant number of museums, galleries, cultural centers, while every year it hosts a series of cultural events and festivals, among them the Olympus summer festival, Panhellenic Festival of Amateur dramatics, the Pinios river festival and the Artfools Festival of short films.

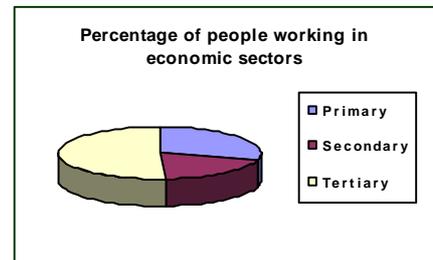


In the field of education, the University of Thessaly accommodates more than 10.000 students and represents, along with the Technological Educational Institution, an important research activity.

### **III. Social and Economic features**

#### **Social characteristics**

The active population of Thessalia accounts for 298,900 people, of which 28,1% works in the primary sector, 19,2% in the secondary sector and 49% in the tertiary sector. The unemployment rate of the region accounts to 10,2% of the population.



The immigration flow has increased by a large scale during the last two decades, offering a considerable potential of low skilled and wage workers. Almost half of the immigrants (47,9%) are employed in agriculture and 18,2% in constructions, allowing certain rural and urban economic activities to survive.

#### **Economy**



The economy of Thessaly is based mostly on activities related to the tertiary sector, which accounts for 60.9 % of the regional GDP. The most important segments of the services economy gravitate around tourism, retail and wholesale trade and transportation services, while the services to the enterprises is not developed to an important degree. The Region accommodates important tourist resources that are situated mainly in the eastern coastal area, the islands and the mountainous areas.

The primary sector continues to have an important share to the composition of the Thessalian economy, as it covers roughly the 35% of the regional GDP. The region represents 10% of the farms and 12% of the cultivated lands in Greece and mostly produces wheat, cotton, cereals, tobacco and many PDO products.

Thessaly is land to quality agro-alimentary products which belong to the EU quality schemes. In particular, regional products with a Protected Designation of Origin are the following 31 local products:



#### **CHEESES PDO**

PDO Feta, kasseri, manouri, Galotyri, Batzos Thessaly Region



PDO Graviera Agrafa Karditsas

PDO MEAT

PDO Lamb and Katsikaki (young goat) Elassonas Larisas

PDO Katsikaki Skopelos, Arnaki Mountain Argitheas, in process for EU registration

PDO FRUITS

PDO Firiki of Pelion mountain and Apples of Zagora mountain

PDO Cherry and Apples Agia, in process for EU registration,

PDO Apples and Chestnuts Melivia, in process for EU registration,

PDO OLIVES

PDO Conservoelia of Pelion mountain Magnesia

PDO NUTS

PDO Almond Sikouri – Almirou, in process for EU registration,

PDO Chestnuts Melivia, in process for EU registration,

PDO FOOD

PDO Potatos Kalipefkis, in process for EU registration

PDO Sausages Trikalon, in process for EU registration

PDO Durum Wheat, in process for EU registration

PDO WINES

PDO Rapsani Larissas, Anchialos Magnisias, Mesenicola Karditsas

PDO Tsipouro Tirnavos, in process for EU registration,

PGI WINES

PGI Tyrnavos, Elassona, Meteora Trikala, Magnisia, Karditsa

The contribution of the forestry and fishing sectors to the regions economy is very low, however, the development of mountainous areas and the reduction of the pollution in the coastal zone of the region emanate prospects for further growth for both silviculture and pisciculture

The deindustrialization of the last decade has perceptibly shrank the secondary sector, which is nowadays consisted mostly by units scattered along the axis formed by the cities of Volos and Larissa. Their activity concentrates in the medium to low technology sectors, such as the food and beverages, textiles and wearing apparel, manufacture of furniture, manufacture of wood and of products of wood, manufacture of basic metals and manufacture of fabricated metal products.



The role of the region in the transportation sector is vital since it is crossed by the main growth axis in Greece, also included in the wider European Network of Transports. Moreover, contact with the Western – European Area has been facilitated by the recent operation of the airport in Volos. Further development in the



regional infrastructure occurred during the first years of the previous decade, due to the construction of the Olympic Complex including brand new sport stadiums and facilities.

### **III. DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **Priorities**

The development planning of Thessaly focuses mainly on rural development, economic growth, employment, sustainability of tourism, innovation and improvement of the region's infrastructure. In particular its priorities are:



- sustainable rural development in terms of sustainable environmental solutions
- development of cultural cooperation and further promotion of sustainable and alternative tourism (i.e. sport, agro, cultural, gastronomic tourism...)
- protection and sustainable use of the natural and man made environment as well as proper management of natural and water resources
- protection of local production methods and promotion of its food and agricultural products that are part of the PDO (Protected Designation Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) EU schemes to domestic and international markets



- participation in EU initiatives for the integration of immigrants
- improvement of the competitiveness of products and services of Thessaly through digital convergence
- amelioration of the region's infrastructure and establishment of a dense transport network
- Convergence and networking with EU regions and Institutions and promotion of sustainable development and social cohesion



#### **IV. CONTACT**

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