**THE UNITED KINGDOM (FURTHER INFORMATION)**

**Climate and weather**

The climate of the UK is **temperate** and **oceanic**, with a high annual rainfall. It is favourably influenced by the warm *Gulf Stream*, which flows northwards around the British Isles; due to its effects, even the ports in northern Scotland do not generally freeze up in winter. There are few extremes of temperature: winters are comparatively mild and summers can be cool and rainy, especially in the mountainous areas of the west and north, which can even be afflicted by severe snowstorms in winter.

**Population, languages**

**The population** of the UK is around 60 million. **The official language** of the UK is English, but three Celtic languages are spoken in the countries of the so-called “Celtic Fringe” (i.e. Scotland, Wales and Ireland).

**The character of the UK’s economy** The structure of the economy was changed in the course of the 20thcentury. New industries appeared, such as aerospace or the production of chemicals and plastics, while the so-called “old industries”, e.g. mining, shipbuilding or textiles, gradually lost the leading position.

**Manufacturing**

Even though manufacturing only contributes over 20 per cent of the Gross National Product today (in comparison with over one third in 1950), it still plays an important role in the modern British economy. Overseas companies are responsible for about a quarter of manufacturing output in the UK.

These are the **leading industries**:

* chemicals, including man-made fibres, cosmetics and detergents, and plastics;
* pharmaceuticals: this industry is the world’s second largest exporter of medicines, many of which were developed in the UK;
* electronics, such as office machinery, computers, transmission systems, radios and TV sets or medical and precision optical equipment;
* motor vehicles, dominated by light commercial vehicles, trucks, buses and cars, and components, whose production has enjoyed strong growth;
* aerospace and defence industry: one of only three in the world that produce the whole spectrum of aerospace products and technology;
* offshore equipment;
* paper and printing: British companies are among the largest in this field.

**Agriculture, fishing and forestry**

British **agriculture is** highly mechanized and highly efficient. Only between 1 and 2 per cent of the total workforce are employed in agriculture, though seasonal labour is often used. As agriculture is dependent on the ups and downs of the weather, it needs governmental aid to compensate potential losses.

The **fishing industry** plays a very important role in the economy, as the UK is one of the European Union’s largest fishing countries.

**Forestry** is an expanding industry. As woodlands cover a comparatively small part of the UK, organizations responsible for protecting and expanding forests encourage their planting and restocking in selected areas throughout the UK.

**Transport**

The UK transport system needs modernising, especially railways and road transport, which needs road-widening.

* Road transport (car, motorcycling, cycling)
* Public transport (trams, double- and single-decker buses, underground railways, taxis)
* Railways
* Shipping (There are cca.80 ports of commercial significance in Great Britain, and several hundreds small harbours that cater for local needs. Major ports are, e.g., London, Grimsby and Immingham or Southampton)
* Air traffic (grows steadily, is highly important economically. All UK airlines and many of the major airports are in the private sector. British Airways is the UK’s biggest airline and one of the largest in the world. **Heathrow** (on the western edge of London) is the busiest airport for international travellers and air freight; **Gatwick** (to the south of London) is the fourth busiest passenger airport in Europe. **Manchester** has the third busiest airport in the UK.

**Monarchy**

The monarchy is popular with most Britons as it is considered as a symbol of continuity. The present Queen, Elizabeth II, belongs to the House of Windsor. When she dies, she should be succeeded by her son Charles, the Prince of Wales. In the case of his death, his sons William and Henry are next in the order of succession.

**Použitá literatura**

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