REGIONAL PROFILES

INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT

2017

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Abbreviations used

AGCC	Agency for Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre
AIP Foundation	Access to Information Program Foundation
BLL	Bulgarian Language and Literature
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTA	Fixed Tangible Assets
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GP	general practitioner / general practice
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MF	Ministry of Finance
MI	Ministry of the Interior
NCPHA	National Center for Public Health and Analyses
NRA	National Revenue Agency
NSI	National Statistical Institute
p.p.	percentage point / percentage points
RIA	Road Infrastructure Agency
SJC	Supreme Judicial Council
WWTP	wastewater treatment plant/plants

Introduction

This is the sixth annual edition of the Regional Profiles: Indicators for Development almanac of regional development in Bulgaria, the only one of this type and scale. The Regional Profiles, as the study is more often referred to, has turned into an established trademark of the IME in recent years. Each fall it is eagerly expected by central and local administrations, business and media, as well as university professors, experts and representatives of the NGO sector who specialize in regional development. The reason may be that the edition combines two characteristics of considerable significance: a unity of structure and range in regional profiles maintained over the years as well as the persistent efforts on behalf of the team to constantly improve, enrich and develop the study. A balance is sought for the information contained in the study between exhaustiveness and brevity to make the profiles both detailed and easy to read.

Another secret behind its success is probably the fact that the regional analyses of the IME have maintained the audience's interest by the Institute's regular publications of analytical material on its web page www.regionalprofiles.bg. Thus the last months have seen the publication of materials on school dropouts and matriculation exams, on regional differences in Bulgaria and in the EU, on the economy of the Danube municipalities and the investment destinations of "Thrace" and "Zagore", on criminality and clearance rates, on the dynamics of household income rates, on the tendencies in local taxes, on district level election results and other issues. These publications have resonated well in society judging by the number of their downloads and the social media reactions as well as their media coverage in the country. The project webpage also publishes all the data used by the IME team – all in all 65 indicators in this year's publication, which makes it the most comprehensive statistic data resource on district level. For example, the project's web page is the only place where one can find statistical series on major local taxes and fees in all 265 Bulgarian municipalities – data IME has been collecting by submitting requests to the respective municipalities as stipulated in the Law for Access to Public Information.

Thanks to the work of institutions which gather and provide statistics, with each successive year we have been able to include in the study more far-reaching and up-to-date information on districts' economies and social environment. In this year's study, the provided information concerns primarily last year – 2016. Exceptions are few and are limited to a few indicators published with a delay of over a year. Those include district figures for GDP per capita and salaries, as well as some indicators in investment, the environment, infrastructure, and education. The analysis also draws on 2017 data concerning administration, local taxes and fees, as well as matriculation exam results, depending on what data was available as of 30 June 2017.

As with previous issues, the publication of Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development in Bulgarian is followed by one in English. The English edition has its own faithful readership among foreign institutions, embassies, and chambers of commerce, and among foreign investors in the country.

We hope this year's publication will be useful to our readers.

Enjoy it!

The IME team

Regional Profiles 2017: Summary

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and Living Conditions

The economic recovery in Europe has become more and more visible in the economy of Bulgaria too. The gross production in most districts increased in 2015, which has had a positive effect on living standards and conditions in them. For yet another year, however, parts of North-western and North-central Bulgaria have remained outside these positive trends such as the districts of Lovech, Razgrad and Silistra, as well as those of Sliven, Stara Zagora and Pernik, which have reported shrinkage or stagnation in their economies.

At the same time, the labor market upsurge and the increasingly acute shortage of workers were driving salaries up everywhere: this observation held true for all districts without exception in 2015. The rapid rise of

the minimal salary (by an average of 9% in 2015), and the rise of minimum and maximum social insurance incomes (by 6 and 8% respectively) also contributed to the rise in declared incomes. Gross annual salaries grew by an average of about 7% in 2015, varying between 3 and 8% from one district to another. National average household incomes also grew in 2015–2016, though at district level there was more diversity: some districts reported rising incomes, others reported dropping incomes, still others reported repeated up and down fluctuations. This is due to the fact that salaries are but one component of household income as well as the statistical flaws characterizing sample surveys such as those about incomes.

Figure 1: GDP per capita and salaries in 2015 (BGN)
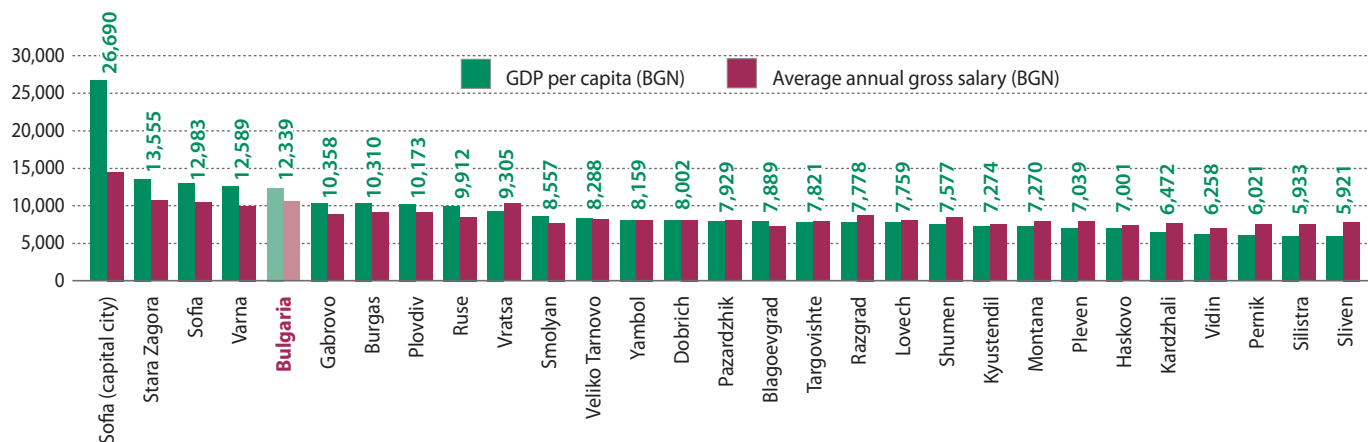
Source: NSI.

Figure 2: Employment and unemployment rates at district level in 2016 (%)
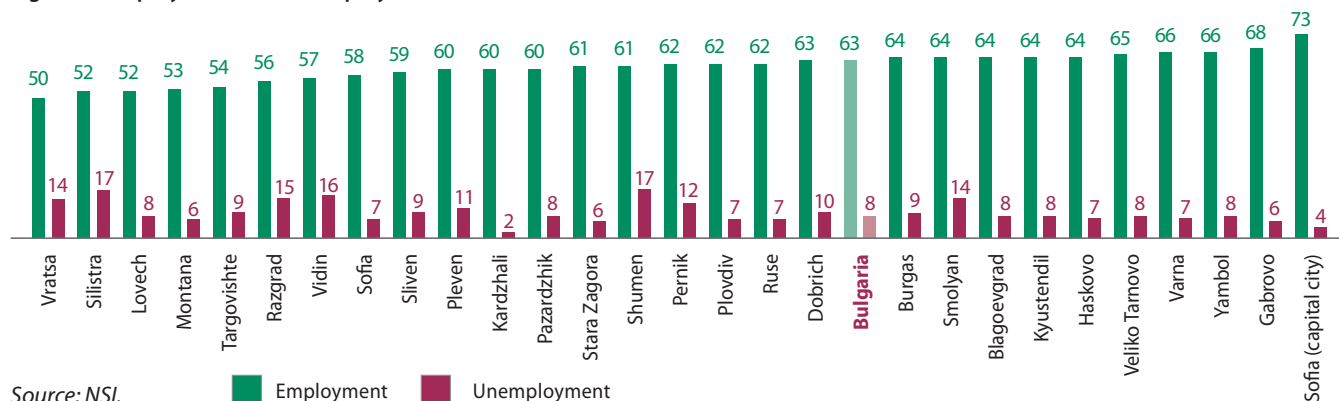
Source: NSI.

Figure 3: Employment and education in 2016 (%)
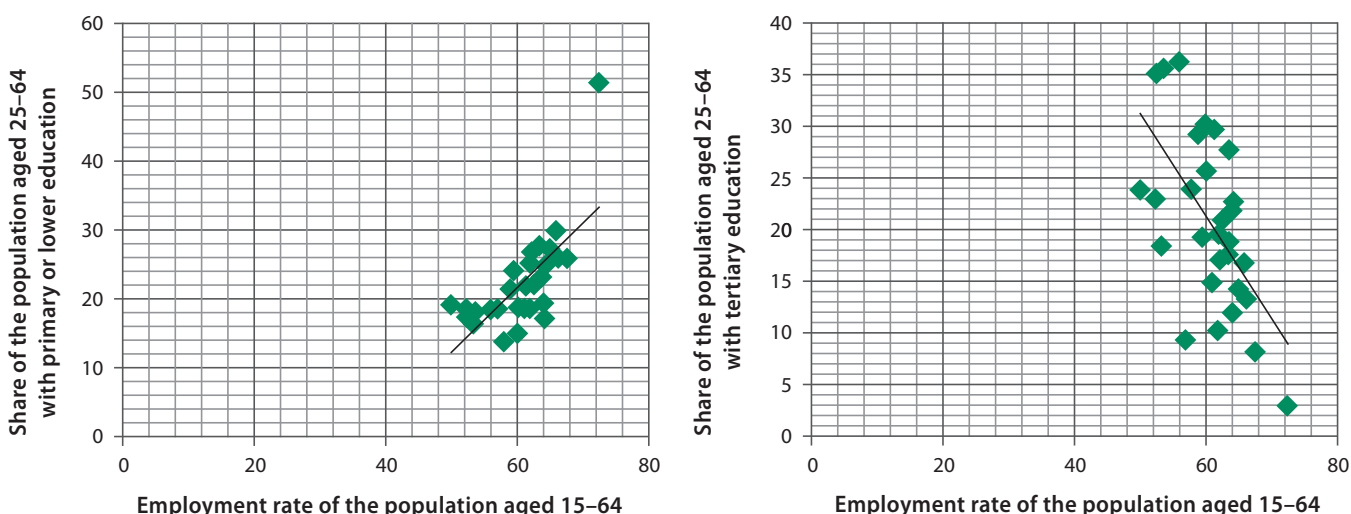
Source: NSI.

Economic growth and the sustained rise in salaries, which in many districts implied higher household incomes, has reflected on living conditions as well. Although still being the country in the EU with the highest share of people living in material deprivation, Bulgaria registered an improvement of this indicator in 2016. If in 2014 about 34% of the population was living in material deprivation, in 2015 this share shrank to 32%. A fact worth noting is that there were only five districts where there was no drop in the number of people living in material deprivation: Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo, Kyustendil, Stara Zagora, and Yambol. Still, in terms of relative poverty, the share of people living below the national poverty line – the country could boast no improvement, nor could the greater number of individual districts. Despite the increasingly visible expansion of the economy, the share of the poor has remained relatively stable in the narrow interval between 21 and 23% in recent years.

Labor Market

The labor market recovery seems to have reached its peak by now, judging by the dynamics in 2016 indicators. The employment of the population in the most active age group (15 to 64) remained stable at the national level in the last two years – 63%. At the moment it has practically reached its pre-crisis peak levels – in 2008 its rate was 64%.
The further growth in employment will depend on the involvement of currently economically inactive persons and their (re)training, as well as on the reversal of the tendency towards net emigration and even importing workers from abroad. The connection between employment and qualification is visible at the district level: the larger the share of people with primary or lower education, the lower the employment in the district, and vice versa – a high share of university graduates goes hand in hand with a high employment rate.
As for the economic activity, in 2016 its dynamics went in the opposite direction. Though unemployment rates dropped, the reason was not the newly created jobs, but rather the population's lower economic activity. In other words, some of the previously unemployed, who had actively been looking for jobs, were no longer on the labor market. Among the possible reasons for that was the rise in salaries after 2014 and the possibility for one breadwinner to provide for the family, the growing real estate market which meant greater income coming from property, as well as more opportunities for entrepreneurship (even if some were in the gray economy) as the economy was recovering. That last aspect is clearly seen in the data on operating non-financial enterprises in the country the number of which grew by almost 10,000 in 2016. The good news is that the number of enterprises increased in almost all districts, except Vidin and Lovech.

Investment

Apart from the availability of suitable workers, the further expansion of the economy will depend on its ability to attract foreign investments and generate local investments. Recent data show that investment in the country has been on the increase: cumulative foreign direct investment (FDI) with an increase of 1.6 b euro from its 2014 value as of the end of 2015. The greater part of new foreign investment was concentrated in the district of Burgas (a rise of 767 m euro compared to the end of 2014), where capital was invested primarily in new facilities in the Lukoil Neftochim refinery. The district of Sofia (capital

Figure 4: Foreign direct investment and expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets by district

Legend:
- ■ Cumulative FDI as of the end of 2015 euro/person
- ■ FTA acquisition expenditures, BGN/person for 2015

District	FDI	FTA
Montana	1,772	201
Silistra	2,244	256
Kyustendil	1,280	337
Haskovo	1,227	448
Сливен	1,202	474
Veliko Tarnovo	2,056	500
Vratsa	1,880	503
Shumen	2,030	590
Yambol	2,182	642
Smolyan	1,843	752
Vidin	1,756	864
Razgrad	1,865	901
Pleven	1,992	1,130
Dobrich	2,172	1,130
Lovech	2,316	1,131
Kardzhali	1,332	1,167
Blagoevgrad	1,799	1,433
Pernik	1,333	1,436
Ruse	2,227	1,501
Targovishte	7,160	1,789
Pazardzhik	1,659	1,855
Plovdiv	2,637	2,368
Gabrovo	2,648	2,510
Stara Zagora	2,674	3,173
Bulgaria	2,973	3,250
Varna	2,094	3,725
Burgas	3,578	4,124
Sofia	3,059	5,407
Sofia (capital city)	6,052	9,164

Source: NSI, calculations: IME.

city) ranked second in FDI growth in 2015 with an increase of 437 m euro. The districts of Varna, Dobrich, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, and Haskovo also enjoyed some inflow of foreign investment. In fact, those were also the districts with the fastest development rates in the last couple of years, each hosting one or several economic branches with vigorous growth after the crisis:

the IT industry, business services outsourcing, tourism, a number of manufacturing sub-branches (car parts, rubber and plastic, pharmaceuticals, machines and equipment etc.).

Alongside the inflow of foreign investment in most districts, the other main indicator of investment activity, Fixed Tangible Assets (FTA) expenditure, increased as

Figure 5: Sums paid to beneficiaries within the framework of operational programs as of 30 June 2017 (BGN/person)

District	Value		District	Value
Sofia (capital city)	2,509		Blagoevgrad	1,017
Gabrovo	2,395		Ruse	1,012
Sofia	1,588		Kardzhali	975
Burgas	1,434		Smolyan	971
Vratsa	1,397		Varna	935
Lovech	1,395		Silistra	929
Yambol	1,217		Pleven	914
Montana	1,181		Haskovo	896
Razgrad	1,159		Dobrich	865
Veliko Tarnovo	1,157		Pernik	826
Vidin	1,129		Targovishte	816
Shumen	1,111		Pazardzhik	782
Stara Zagora	1,064		Sliven	623
Plovdiv	1,044		Kyustendil	614

Source: eufunds.bg, calculations by IME.

Figure 6: Share of roads from the national road network with good surface quality (%)
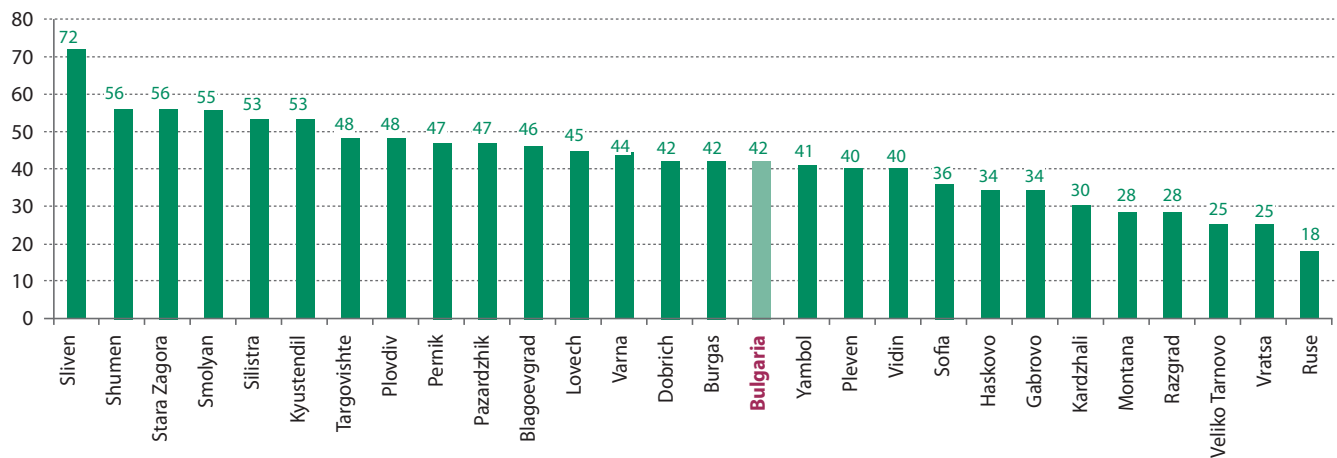
Source: RIA.

well. Recent data show that those expenses were approaching an average of 3,000 BGN/person annually (2015). It is not surprising that in Sofia they were almost twice the national average, whereas in some districts (Kardzhali, Kyustendil, Pernik, Sliven and Haskovo) they were less than half its size. It should be noted here that FTA expenditures also include capital expenditure by state and local government, hence they are strongly influenced by the utilization of EU funds. Obviously, in districts with a high rate of operational programs' fund utilization FTA expenditure is also high. Examples in point are Gabrovo and Lovech, which have traditionally been among the leaders in sums paid to beneficiaries from operational programs.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is an important element of the investment environment. All other conditions equal, investors would prefer territories with good infrastructural connectivity, high quality roads and easy access to highways and first class roads, as well as transparent and up-to-date administrations. Unfortunately, despite

considerable investment in road infrastructure due to accessible EU funds, the share of highways and first class roads has remained almost unchanged in the last 7 years, with a meager rise from 17.5% in 2009 to 18.6% in 2015. The same holds true for road surface quality in the last 5 years: the share of roads with good surface quality rose symbolically from 40.3% in 2012 to 41.5% in 2016. These observations lead to the conclusion that while new roads are being built and launched, including highways, investment in the maintenance of the existing road infrastructure is limited. The reason for this is that according to the terms of EU infrastructural funds the funding may be used for building new roads and parts of roads but not for the rehabilitation of old ones.

Varna, Stara Zagora, Shumen, and Plovdiv stand out among the districts with the best rating on infrastructure, whereas Kardzhali, Pleven and Smolyan are in the worst position. As relatively underdeveloped districts, the latter badly need infrastructural improvement and particularly increased investment in the construction of first class roads and highways so that they can get better positioning on Bulgaria's investment map.

Figure 7: Instances of increases or decreases of selected local taxes 2013–2017
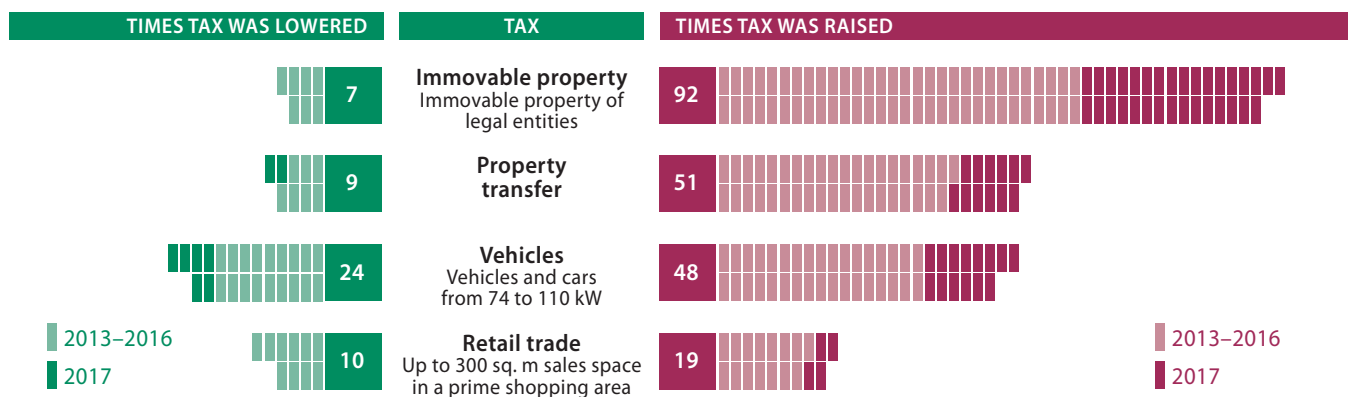
Source: IME based on requests for access to public information to municipalities.

Figure 8: Cadastral map coverage (%)
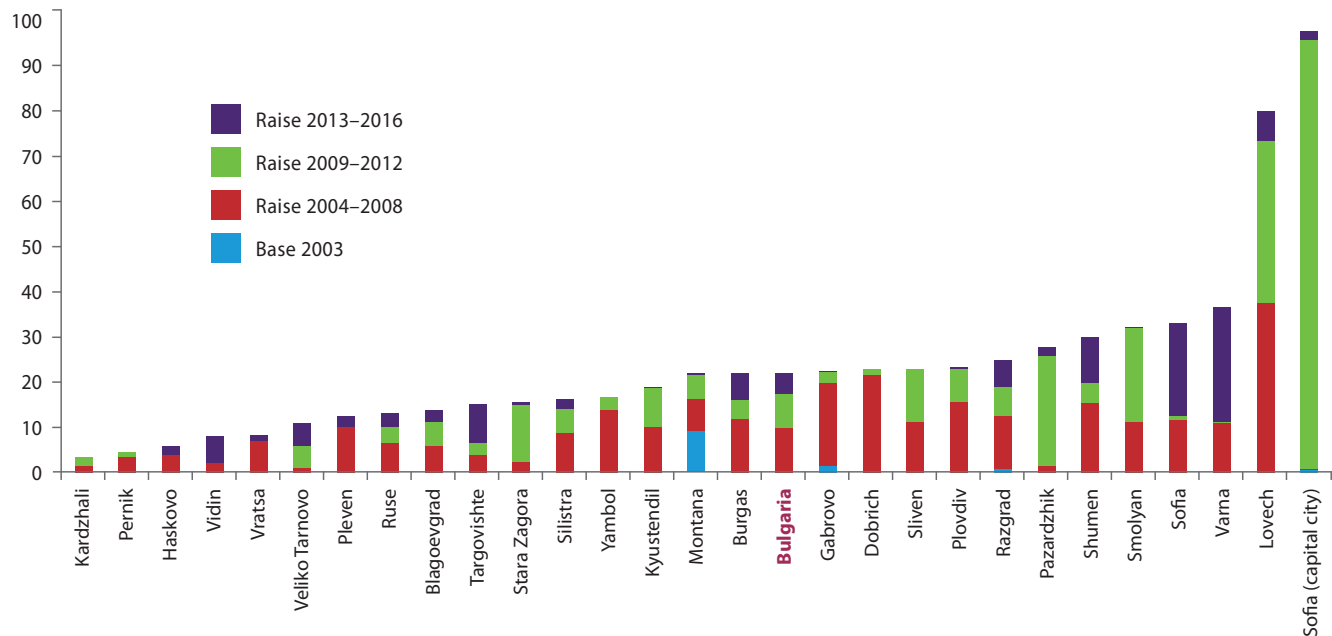
Source: NSI.

Taxes and Fees

In 2017, local taxes and fees registered a continuing tendency for the tax burden to go up. 62 cases of raised rates were registered by IME in 2017, and only 8 cases of lowered rates. Altogether between 2013 and 2017 we registered 210 cases of raised and 50 cases of lowered taxes in the four main categories: the tax on the immovable property of legal entities, the vehicle tax, the property transfer tax, and the license tax for retailers. There may have been more cases of raised taxes, having in mind the fact that the requests for information were answered by about 75–80% of municipalities. The reasons for the increased taxes lie in the bad condition of municipal budgets in numerous municipalities and in the refusal to decentralize, which forces municipalities to raise local taxes and fees within their jurisdiction. Despite the common tendency for raising taxes, our observations have confirmed once again the relatively inconsiderable role played by them when people choose a municipality for business or resettlement.

Traditionally, local tax burdens have been higher in districts with relatively strong economies – Sofia, Varna, and Burgas, and lower in underdeveloped districts such as Vidin, Montana, Pernik, and Silistra. However, there are numerous exceptions to this rule: relatively developed districts like Stara Zagora and Gabrovo are characterized by low taxes and fees, while districts like Kardzhali and Razgrad – lagging behind in economic terms – have relatively high tax burdens. The reason for these "anomalies" can be found in the missing connection between local taxes and fees, on one hand, and decisions on setting up a business or relocating to

a particular municipality, on the other. The inconsiderable role of taxes and fees is no news as payments constitute a relatively small part of the total tax burden both on business and individuals.

Administration

As far as administration is concerned, the best news is the quick increase in local authorities' transparency, measured by the Active Transparency Rating of the Access to Information Program NGO. The national average rating went up from 49% in 2016 to 59% in 2017. Only three districts have registered a certain decline in their transparency ratings: Burgas, Sliven, and Sofia (capital city). At the same time, self-evaluation of local authorities on the development of electronic government and one-stop shop services has on the whole been in stagnation for years, and has only registered a symbolic improvement in 2017.

The coverage of the territory by cadaster maps, which is of paramount importance for investment and construction, has also been slow in progress, increasing from 20 to 23%. Only the districts of Sofia and Lovech have high cadastral map coverage (98 and 81%, respectively), whereas a number of relatively fast developing districts such as Plovdiv, Burgas, and Stara Zagora have less than 1/4 of their territory covered by cadastral maps. In some of the slow developing districts, such as Kardzhali, Pernik, Haskovo, Vidin, and Vratsa coverage is no more than 10%, which is an additional obstacle to investment in these districts.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The districts with the worst demographic conditions and tendencies are the districts with little investment, low employment, low salaries, and high unemployment. The districts of Vidin, Vratsa, Lovech, Kardzhali, and Kyustendil have for some time held the bottom positions in terms of population ageing and general demographic processes. Yet for another successive year this group was joined by the district of Gabrovo, which ranks immediately after the leader, Sofia (capital city), in overall economic development. Gabrovo had the most conspicuous population ageing despite its growing economy and having the second highest employment rate after the capital. The age dependency ratio, as a ratio between the population aged 65+ and that aged 0–14, is rather unfavorable in the district of Gabrovo: for each child there are 2.5 old age people, and for each person of working age (15–64) there are almost 0.5 old age people.

On the whole, demographic tendencies in the country have remained strongly negative though they were a little less extreme in 2016: natural growth went slightly up, though staying negative (–6‰), whereas the age dependency ratios deteriorated more slowly than they did in 2015. Still, the net outmigration increased in 2016 to reach –1.3‰. The districts which have been losing population fastest because of migration are Smolyan, Vidin, and Vratsa, while those which have been gaining from migration are fewer. In 2016, the latter's number was reduced to the strong economic centers such as Sofia, Varna, Burgas, and Plovdiv. For yet another year the least favorable natural population fluctuation has been "reserved" for the districts of Vidin, Montana, Kyustendil, Gabrovo, Pernik, Lovech,

and Vratsa which have two-digit negative natural growth rates.

Education

The deteriorating demographic picture in the country has been a natural barrier to the Bulgarian economy's growth potential. Real growth has failed to rise above 4% on an annual base for two and a half years, while recent analyses by the IMF and EC that include Bulgaria show that the economy is already working at its level of potential or close to it. The main reason behind is human capital or rather its deficiency. Along this line, the population's education and qualification are of exceptional importance for the maximum utilization of this increasingly scarce resource. However, on the whole, university enrolment has been on the decrease – probably because of the smaller numbers of high school graduates, but also because of the worsening quality of university education and the fact that alternatives are sought abroad. In 2016, it was the main university centers such as Sofia, Veliko Tarnovo, Varna, Plovdiv and Blagoevgrad, that lost the greatest number of students. The number of school goers has also been on the decline: in this case, this is due to demographic reasons as well as the inability of the educational system first to enroll and then to keep children at risk in schools.

The net enrolment rate and the share of school dropouts remained relatively stable during the last year to reach 78% and 2.9% respectively in 2015. Dobrich is the district that failed both in enrolment (with an enrolment rate in first grade of only 68%) and in keeping children in school (with a share of dropouts of about 5%). The districts of Sliven and Pazardjik, despite having enrolment rates comparable with the national average, are the two other districts with a dropout rate of about 5%.

Figure 9: Natural growth and net migration rates in 2016 (%)

Net migration rate

Rate of natural increase
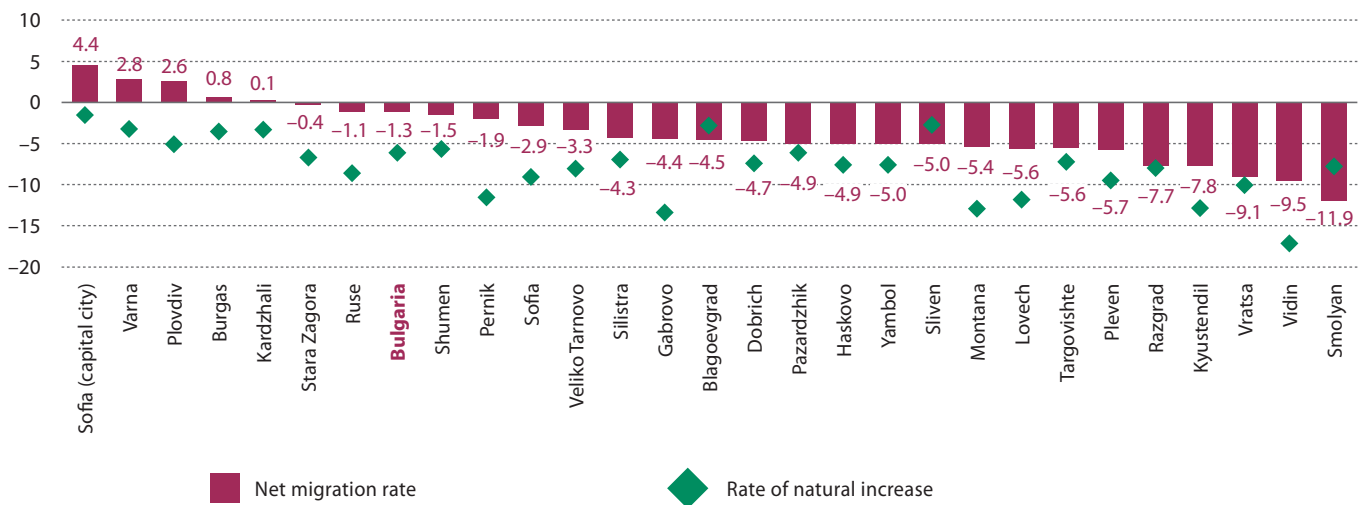
Source: NSI.

Figure 10: Grades at the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature in 2017
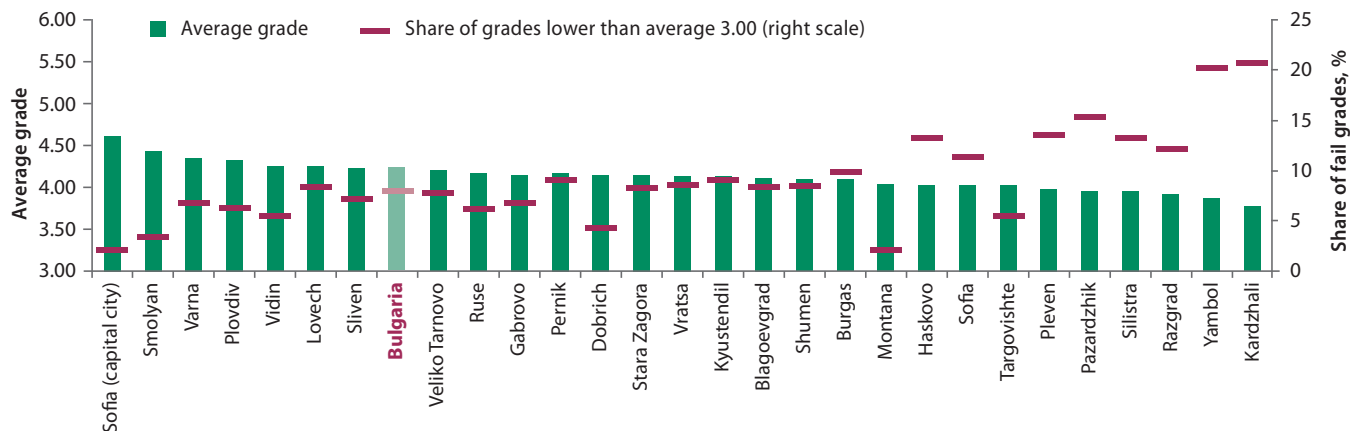
Source: MES.

Municipal dropout data reveal an even more varied picture. In most municipalities (a total of 101) the share of dropouts is below 2%. There are, however, "clusters" of municipalities where the problem of school dropouts is much worse. In several small municipalities around Vidin and Vratsa, in almost all municipalities in the district of Dobrich, two municipalities south of Burgas and several close to Ruse, Plovdiv, and Stara Zagora, dropouts exceed 7–8% of students. The municipalities of Trun, Letnitsa, Venets, Hitrino, and Kostinbrod have performed even worse. A conspicuous factor which predetermines the share of dropouts is municipality size: large municipalities and district centers have performed better than small ones.

The quality of education, on the other hand, if we judge by the results from the mandatory matriculation examinations in Bulgarian language and literature, has widely varied. There are districts where over 20% of students failed at the exams and where grades were far below the national average of 4.22 in 2017: examples of this are Yambol and Kardzhali with average grades of 3.87 and 3.77 respectively. At the other extreme, apart from the traditional leader Sofia (capital city), the district of Smolyan stood out this year. The latter managed to rank first in overall education rating after determined efforts to improve the local educational system in recent years. Matriculation exam results in Smolyan were the second highest after the capital. The district registered the greatest increase in the number of teachers relative to the number of students which probably also contributed for the improved results.

The overall number of teachers in the country grew by slightly over 2,000 in 2016 with most districts registering an increase. Still, the correlation between the changed teacher-student ratio and the change in the matriculation exam average grade, though positive, is weak. It seems that a greater number of teachers in itself is not enough to trigger a serious change in the results of school education.

Healthcare

Both quality of life and healthcare are of particular importance for human capital locally. For another successive year the highest rating for local health-

Figure 11: Number of persons per specialist doctor in 2016
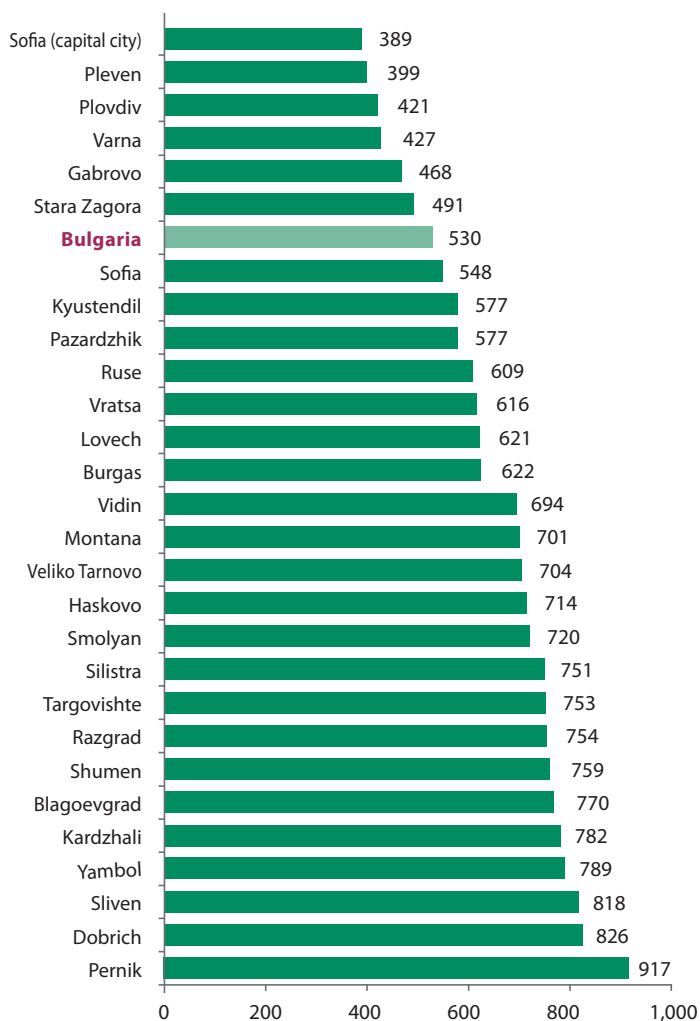
Source: NSI.

care was held by Sofia (capital city), Pleven, and Gabrovo. Ensured access to doctors (including general practitioners and specialists) was improved in 2016 though in some districts – Razgrad, Targovishte, and Kardzhali – their shortage remained serious. Parallel to the increased number of doctors, there was an increase in the number of hospital beds in general hospitals – by over 3,000 in 2016, bed availability rising from 4.6 per 1,000 people a year earlier to 5.1 per 1,000 people. Nevertheless, the shortage of specialists and the insufficient hospital capacity in a number of districts forced local people to look for healthcare outside their district. Some of the districts with a relatively small number of hospitalizations in local hospitals were Veliko Tarnovo, Dobrich, Shumen, Yambol, Kardzhali, and Blagoevgrad.

Figure 12a: Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people by district in 2016

Above 15	14–15	12–14	11–12	Below 10
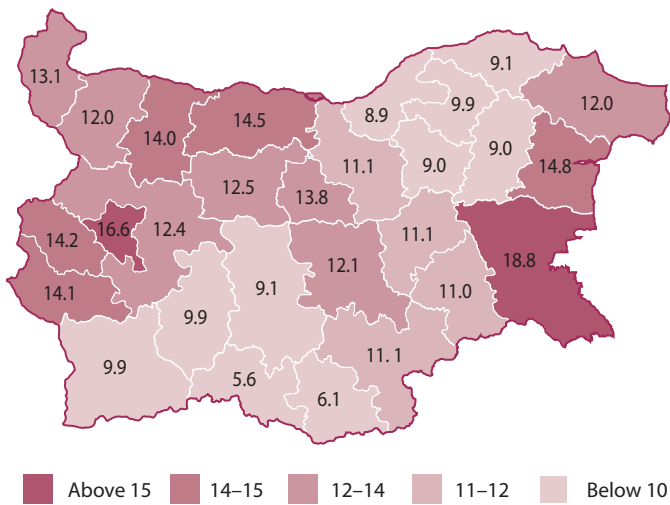
Figure 12b: Cleared crimes against the person and property from those registered in 2016 (%)

Above 70	60–70	50–60	40–50	Below 40
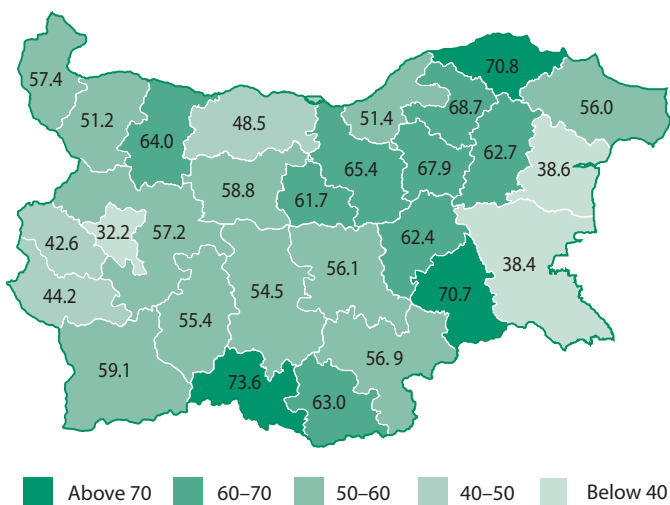
Source: MI.

Security and Justice

Security and the efficiency of local courts are important elements of the social environment. Here, improvements are visible at the national level: crime rates (registered crimes against the person and property) have been falling, while clearance rates have been improving in most districts. As in the previous year, Sofia (capital city), Burgas, and Varna remained the districts with the highest crime rates and with low clearance rates, respectively. In the capital, less than 1/3 of registered crimes were detected, the national figure being almost 1/2. At the same time, the work of criminal sections in district courts grew more efficient. Though judges' workloads were a little higher in 2016, the share of pending cases decreased, while that of cases closed within 3 months went up. The capital was a bad example in administering speedy justice, too: the number of cases closed within 3 months was the lowest in the country here (79% compared to the national average of 89%), whereas the share of pending cases was the highest (13% compared to 8% nationally). The reason for this may be the overload of judges at the Sofia city court: a criminal judge sees 14 cases on average every month, while the national average is 9 cases per judge. Yet, there are examples of the opposite trend: high workloads do not impede justice speed in the districts of Plovdiv and Stara Zagora.

Environment

The environment is another significant influence on local social conditions. In this respect, the good news concerns mostly the population's connectedness with sewerage systems which include wastewater treatment plants. In 2015, connectivity was already 62% com-

Figure 13: Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere by district in 2015 (tonnes/sq. km)
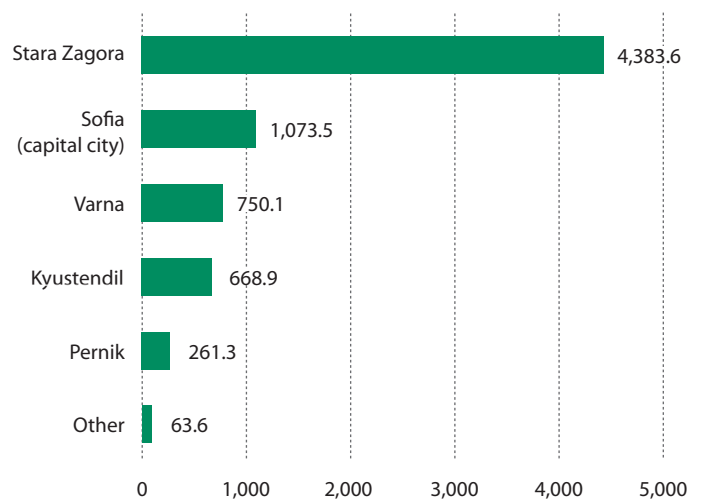
Source: NSI.

pared to 57% a year earlier thanks to the completion of a number of projects for the so called water cycles funded by EU funds. However, there are still some districts where the share of the population connected to wastewater treatment plants was below 10% despite the relatively high connectedness with sewerage. Those were the districts of Vidin, Silistra, and Yambol. In Silistra the wastewater treatment plant started operating recently which will be reflected in the 2016 data. In Vidin, work on the water cycle project was interrupted because of embezzlement signals and it still has to be renewed; in Yambol the project was delayed as well.

With the acceleration of economic growth and the growth of industry, increased air pollution was registered in the country in 2015. The district of Stara Zagora remained the leader in carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere; emissions increased by almost 1/5 in 2015 to reach 4,384 t/sq. km. Emissions in that district exceeded by over 4 times those in the district with the second most polluted air in the country – Sofia (capital city).

Culture

The sphere of culture was perhaps the one bringing more good news than any other in 2016. Because of the increased income and consumption, as well as the favorable results in the tourist industry, all monitored indicators for culture registered some improvement in 2016. Visits to the theatre as well as those to museums and libraries all grew in number. Sofia (capital city), Gabrovo, and Veliko Tarnovo could be named as the three cultural capitals of the country, all three districts standing out with a very high number of visits to culture places/events relative to the local population.

Figure 14: Registered visits to cinemas, theaters, museums and libraries per 1,000 of the annual average population in 2016

Cinema visits
Theater visits
Museum visits
Library visits
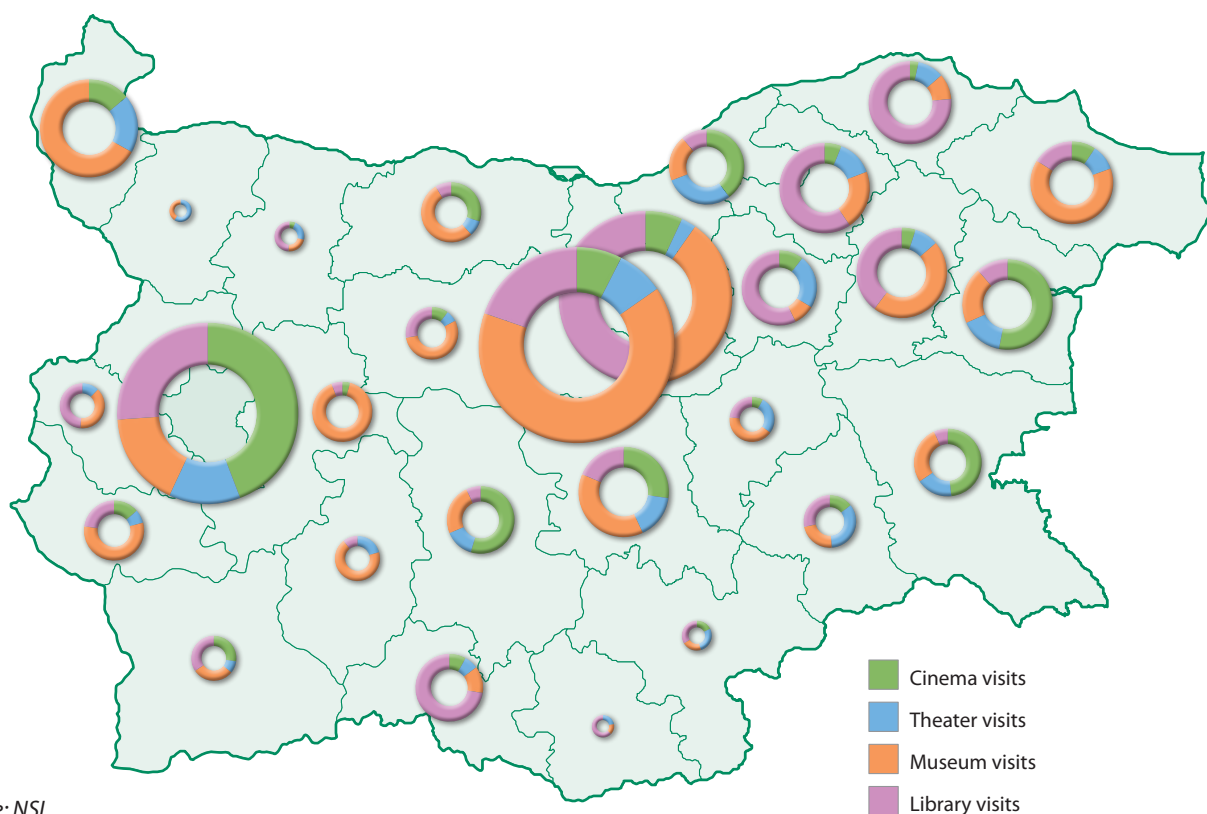
Source: NSI.

Blagoevgrad District

▸ Population (2016)	311,576
▸ Area (sq. km)	6,449.5
▸ Number of settlements	281
▸ Share of urban population (%)	59.6

Map showing municipalities: BLAGOEVGRAD, YAKORUDA, RAZLOG, BELITZA, SIMITLI, BANSKO, KRESNA, Satovcha, Strumyani, GOTSE DELCHEV, Garmen, SANDANSKI, Hadzhidimovo, PETRICH

Overview

The welfare of the residents in the district has improved, though it remained below the national average figures. Employment also continued its upward movement, whereas unemployment decreased though the reason for this was the population's lower economic activity, not the opening of new job opportunities. There was still a noticeable tendency for the number of people with university degrees among the local population of working age to go down despite the presence of some of the country's leading universities. Investment has been on the increase in recent years though it has stayed below the national average relative to the population. The level of local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities is relatively low.

Blagoevgrad is still among the districts with a relatively favorable age structure. Education is relatively good. There is a shortage of medical specialists and the number of hospital beds is somewhat small, which explains the relatively small number of patients in local hospitals. Blagoevgrad is still underperforming in administration of justice – in terms of the speediness of solving cases, despite the low crime rate. The environment is in a relatively good condition but cultural life cannot boast any particular intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Income and Living Conditions

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Labor Market

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Investment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Infrastructure

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Taxes and Fees

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Administration

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Demography

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Education

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	●

Healthcare

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Security and Justice

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Environment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Culture

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●

Despite the increase of both GDP and income per capita in 2015, figures are still considerably below the national average. GDP per capita grew by 4% compared to 2014 to reach 7,889 BGN, while the national average rose to 12,339 BGN (7%). The average annual gross salary in the district increased by 5% to reach 7,181 BGN but remained lower by about 1/3 than the national average.

The tendency towards salary growth in 2015 influenced the growth in household income that year. In 2016, however, income per household member remained below the national average but registered a slight drop to 4,461 BGN annually. The main reason was the shrinkage in incomes from salaries, which implies a possible decrease in salaries in 2016. The share of the population living below the country's poverty line increased in 2015 to values above the national average.

Labor Market ●●●●

In 2016, for a second successive year, the employment rate in the district went up to stay above the national average, while unemployment dropped but was still slightly above average for the country: 8.3% vs. 7.7% respectively. These positive tendencies, however, were due totally to the decreasing population as a whole, and the workforce in particular, which lost 4,600 people. The number of people in employment (aged 15–64) dropped by 1,100, whereas unemployment decreased because some of the unemployed in 2015 became economically inactive. The number of people aged 25–64 with university degrees in the district was slowly going down in recent years and in 2016 it was already considerably below the national average level: 19.4% vs. 27.7% nationally. In view of the fact that some of the leading universities in the country are located in the district, this tendency shows that after getting their degrees most young people do not stay in it. The working age population's educational structure is positively affected by the rapidly dropping share of the population with primary and lower education, though it is still higher than the national average.

Investment ●●●

In the last few years the number of non-financial enterprises in Blagoevgrad district grew considerably faster than the average in the country (to 62 per 1,000 people vs. 55 per 1,000 nationally). Yet, investment continued to be below the country average in 2015. FTA expenditure per capita grew to reach 1,799 BGN/person – still far below the national average of 2,937 BGN/person. Foreign investment remained almost two times lower than the national average: 1,433 euro/person vs. 3,250 euro/person nationally. Still, during the last years the district registered some inflow of foreign investment – its growth rate being above the national average.

Operational program funds utilization also registered some increase. As of 30th June 2017 the sums paid to beneficiaries from the district amounted to 317 m BGN or 1,017 BGN/person (vs. the national average of 1,344 BGN/person). Most funds were utilized in the Bansko municipality: 2,283 BGN/person, whereas the least were utilized by the municipality of Belitsa (248 BGN/person).

Infrastructure ●●

Blagoevgrad is one of the districts in the country with the lowest density of road and railway infrastructure. The share of highways and first class roads was also lower: 13.7% vs. the national average of 18.6% in 2015, but it has been on the increase with the successive stages in the construction of the "Struma" highway coming to completion. Road surface quality deteriorated in 2016 but the share of roads in good condition was still above the national average.

In terms of Internet access and usage, figures show that Blagoevgrad continues to be among the districts close to the national average, as the indicators grow in tune with the general tendencies.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●

Local taxes and fees in the municipalities of the district of Blagoevgrad are relatively low. All monitored taxes had average levels in Blagoevgrad municipalities lower than the national average rates. Municipalities in the district have maintained rates that are somewhat higher only in the case of waste collection fees for non-residential property of legal entities.

Among the district's municipalities only Blagoevgrad and Bansko kept higher rates for local taxes and fees in 2017. Most municipalities did not raise their taxes and fees in 2017 compared with 2016.

Administration ●●●

The cadastral map coverage of the district's territory did not increase in 2016, remaining at 13.8% vs. the national average of 22.5%. The municipalities of Satovcha, Simitli, Strumyani, Hadjidimovo and Yakoruda do not have a single hectare of cadastral coverage yet – a hindrance to investment in these municipalities.

In 2017, the ratings for the development of electronic government and the availability of one-stop shop administrative services were comparable with the national average. The same goes for the transparency of local authorities.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●●●

In 2016 the district of Blagoevgrad still ranked among the districts with relatively favorable age dependency ratios, though the population went on ageing, following nation-wide tendencies. The natural growth rate was also almost twice the national average, though being negative: –3.5‰ vs. –6.0‰ nationally. Migration from the district was still high as well: the net migration rate in 2016 was –4.5%.

The district is still relatively poorly urbanized. 59.6% of the population lives in towns compared to 73.3% nationwide.

Education ●●●●●

In 2016 Blagoevgrad was one of the districts with the highest enrolment in 5th–8th grade, and the rate retained this upward tendency to reach 84.1% while the national average was 78.2%. The indicators on repeaters and school dropouts were almost twice more favorable than the national average as well. In 2016 the percentage of repeaters in the district went down to 0.6% vs. the national average of 1.1%, while that of dropouts went down to 1.5% vs. the national average of 2.9% in 2015. The grades at matriculation exams of students from Blagoevgrad went up in 2017, though still below the national average: 4.12 vs. 4.22 nationally.

In 2016 the number of university students fell in the district for the third successive year – similar to national tendencies.

Healthcare ●●

In 2016 the share of health-insured people in the district remained close to the national average: 88.8% in the district vs. 88.1% nationally. The availability of general practices was also similar to the rest of the country (1,659 people per GP vs. 1,611 people in the country), but in the district there was still a relatively high shortage of specialists. In 2016, a specialist in the district was responsible for 770 people vs. 530 nationally. Nevertheless, an improvement has been noticeable in this indicator during the last few years: in 2013, a specialist was responsible for over 850 people.

In 2016 Blagoevgrad was also among the districts with the lowest number of available beds in general hospitals relative to the population (3.3 per 1,000 people compared to 5.1 per 1,000 people nationally), as well as the smallest number of hospitalizations (180 per 1,000 people vs. 235 per 1,000 people nationally).

Security and Justice ●

Blagoevgrad district kept its poor performance in administration of justice in 2016. The share of criminal cases at the district court which were closed within 3 months dropped to reach 83% while the national figure went up to 89%. The rate of pending cases in the district (11%) was also above the national figure of 8%. At the same time, the workloads of judges in the district were still lower than the national average, though following the national tendencies, they went on rising for the second successive year. In 2016, a criminal judge in the district saw 8.8 cases a month whereas the national average was 9.4 cases.

Registered crimes in the district of Blagoevgrad have traditionally been fewer than the national average. Besides, they have been dropping for the fourth successive year to reach 9.9 per 1,000 people vs. the national average at 12.6 per 1,000 people. The crime clearance rate was higher in 2016, reaching 59% vs. 48% nationally.

Environment ●●●

The environment in the district is in relatively good condition. The share of the population in areas with public sewerage systems quickly rose in 2015 to reach 80.9% (vs. 75.5% nationally). Because of the district's relatively low urbanization, the share of the population with access to sewerage systems connected with wastewater treatment plants was still low: 31.2% vs. 62.3% nationally in 2015.

Atmospheric pollution with carbon dioxide was dozens of times lower than the national average in 2015. The same year carbon dioxide emissions were 14.1 t/sq. km vs. 323.8 t/sq. km nationally.

Culture ●

Cultural life in the district is not very lively. The average number of visits to theaters and museums relative to the population remained about two times smaller than the national average in 2016. Visits to theaters dropped to 108 per 1,000 people vs. 322 per 1,000 people on average for the country.

The highest value for the district was registered by the indicator for library visits. Since 2009, interest in the local libraries has grown considerably to reach 432 visits per 1,000 people, which was still below the national average of 605 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Blagoevgrad

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,425	7,574	7,641	7,589	7,889	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,225	3,823	4,132	4,181	4,502	4,461
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,990	6,271	6,566	6,818	7,181	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	12.4	15.3	18.2	16.0	23.6	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	70.5	73.0	73.2	73.0	70.8	69.8
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	64.6	65.4	63.3	62.6	63.4	64.0
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	8.4	10.4	13.5	14.1	10.3	8.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	16.6	17.7	18.0	19.6	19.5	19.4
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	50	53	55	58	62	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,228	1,105	1,335	1,563	1,799	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	798	957	1,108	1,214	1,433	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	42.3	54.9	60.5	61.9	63.3	64.0
Share of roads in good condition (%)	56.6	55.0	51.9	49.1	59.7	46.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	11.3	11.3	12.8	12.9	13.8	13.8

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−2.1	−2.6	−2.7	−3.6	−3.4	−3.5
Net migration rate (‰)	−3.2	−4.8	−3.7	−4.5	−5.3	−4.5
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.46	4.19	4.29	4.41	4.24	4.04
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	3.49	5.37	3.77	2.68	6.13	10.50
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	84.5	83.8	83.5	82.9	84.0	84.1
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	86.6	86.1	84.9	86.3	88.9	88.8
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	127.1	159.7	168.6	143.5	182.8	179.5
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	12.8	12.9	12.0	11.1	11.0	9.9
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	36.1	33.4	39.0	40.6	49.3	59.1
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	1.5	11.9	13.5	10.5	15.4	11.2
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	26.3	26.3	26.5	26.8	31.2	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	21.6	20.8	16.6	11.3	14.1	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	285	308	323	307	318	345
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	113	104	131	124	138	108

Burgas District

▶ Population (2016)	413,284
▶ Area (sq. km)	7,748.1
▶ Number of settlements	261
▶ Share of urban population (%)	76.2

Map labels: SUNGURLARE, Ruen, AYTOS, NESEBAR, KARNOBAT, KAMENO, POMORIE, BURGAS, SOZOPOL, SREDETS, PRIMORSKO, TSAREVO, MALKO TARNOVO
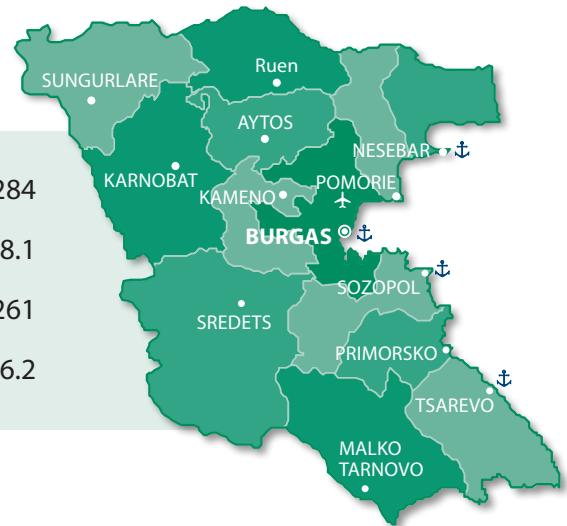
Overview

The high investment activity in the district affected both the labor market and incomes and living conditions in 2016. Employment in Burgas continued to go up and was above the national average for the first time in ten years. The share of highways and first class roads is way above national average figures. The municipal administration has performed well in electronic services and one-stop shop services. The rates of local taxes and fees in Burgas municipalities have stayed relatively high, though. The demographic picture in the district is still relatively good, though the ageing of the population has followed the general tendency in the country. The state and the results of the educational system in Burgas are relatively unfavorable. The shortage of doctors, the relatively small share of health-insured people, and the insufficient capacity of hospitals explain the small number of hospitalizations relative to the population. The district's relatively poor performance in security has continued. A rising interest in cinemas and theaters has been noticeable in the last few years.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
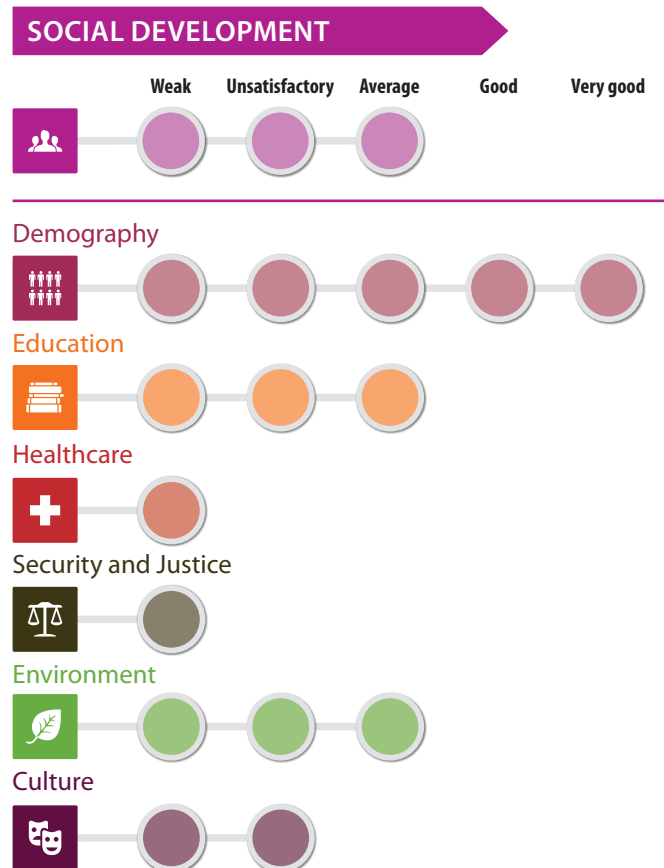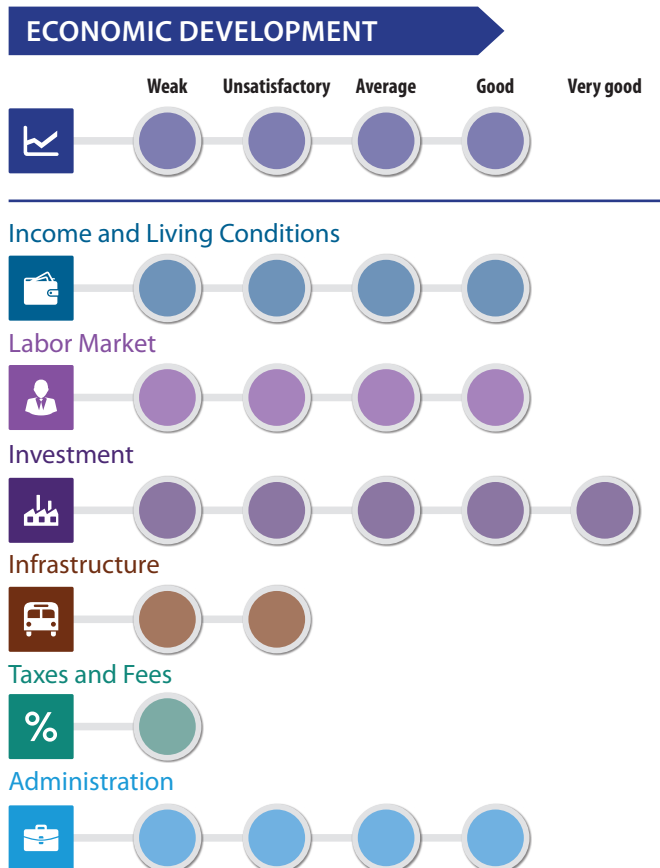
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

The high investment activity in the district was reflected both in the labor market and in incomes and living conditions. In 2015, GDP per capita rose twice faster than the country's average to reach 10,310 BGN vs. 12,339 BGN nationally. Salaries also increased, though at a slower rate and the district took the 6th place in the country in labor remuneration with an average annual salary of 9,102 BGN.

The population's incomes rose in 2016 to reach 4,592 BGN/person vs. 5,167 BGN/person nationally.

With the increase of incomes in the district the share of people living in material deprivation dropped in 2015. The relative share of the people living below the national poverty line also dropped to 19.5% – also below the national average of 22.9%.

Labor Market ●●●●

The employment rate in the district of Burgas went on growing in 2016 and was above the national figure for the first time in 10 years at 63.6% vs. 63.4% nationally. Economic activity also increased, despite the reversal of the upward trend in the country as a whole in 2016. Yet, unemployment in the district of Burgas was still relatively high. In 2016 it dropped to 9.0% vs. 7.7% nationally.

Despite the relatively good employment and unemployment figures, the district suffered from the unfavorable educational structure of the population aged 25–64. In 2016, university graduates were 23.1% vs. 27.7% nationally, while people with primary and lower education were 27.8% vs. 17.7% nationally. For the last ten years the tendency has been towards improvement of both indicators.

The ratio of demographic replacement as a ratio between the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was more favorable than the national average; it even exceeded that in the capital, which indicates relatively good prospects for workforce reproduction.

Investment ●●●●●

Burgas is still one of the districts where investment activity is highest. The district comes second after the capital in number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population and the third district in terms of attracted foreign investment. FDI grew abruptly in 2015 by 767 m euro (mainly due to some renovation and enlargement in the Lukoil Neftochim refinery in Burgas, which added a new plant) to reach 4,124 euro/person by the end of 2015 vs. 3,250/person nationally. Though FTA acquisition expenditure in the district dropped in 2015, they retained a relative high level: 3,587 BGN/person vs. 2,973 BGN/person nationally.

The district is still among the best achievers in utilization of EU funds as well. As of 30th June 2017, the sums paid to beneficiaries from operational programs in it reached almost 900 m BGN or 1,434 BGN/person vs. 1,344 BGN/person nationally. The best performing municipalities in this respect were those of Sozopol (over 5,000 BGN/person) and Pomorie (over 3,000 BGN/person).

Infrastructure ●●

Road and railroad network density in the district is lower than the national average. At the same time, the share of highways and first class roads is considerably higher (25.9% vs. the national average of 18.6%) mainly due to the Trakiya highway. The road surface quality is similar to national average indicators: 42.0% of surfaces are in good condition vs. 41.5% nationally.

The share of people with Internet access as well as that of persons who used the Internet in 2016 was lower than national average figures.

Taxes and Fees ●

Local tax and fee rates in the district's municipalities are relatively high. The average rates in Burgas place the district third – after the capital and the district of Varna – regarding tax burden from the main local taxes and fees. The only lower taxes are the ones on immovable property and the waste collection fee. Burgas is the district with the highest tax for vehicles of 74 to 110 kW of power: 1.54 BGN/kW while the national average is 1.35 BGN/kW. Within the district is situated Sozopol – the municipality with the highest tax rate for taxi transportation of passengers – 1,000 BGN – almost twice the national average of 525 BGN.

Administration ●●●●

The ranking of the administration for availability of electronic services and one-stop shop services went up in 2017, being above the national average figures. The transparency rating of local administrations, however, has been on the decline for the second successive year: it was below the national average for the first time.

As far as cadastral coverage is concerned, the city municipality of Burgas was the single one to enlarge its cadastral map coverage in 2016. The municipality of Nesebar is still among the few Bulgarian municipalities with full cadastral coverage of their territory, whereas the municipalities of Aitos and Ruen still have 0% cadastral coverage.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●●●●

The demographic picture in the district is still relatively good. The population is ageing but the age dependency ratio figures are still considerably below the national average ones. The ratio between the population aged 65+ and that under 14 is lower only in the district of Sliven. The natural growth rate went further down in 2016 but remains one of the lowest in the country at –3.6‰ vs. –6.0‰ nationwide. What is more, the district of Burgas still attracts new population and the net migration rate is positive.

The district is relatively highly urbanized: 76.2% of the population lives in cities (vs. 73.3% for the country as a whole), and the density was 2,260 people/sq. km in 2016 (vs. the national average of 1,548 people/sq. km).

Education ●●●

The state of the education system in the district and its results are relatively unfavorable. The number of students enrolled in 5th–8th grade dropped to 77.7% in 2016, while it was 78.2% nationally. The share of repeaters and dropouts increased while the share of fail grades at the matriculation exams in BLL remained above the national average: almost 10% vs. the national average of 8% in 2017. The average grade at the matriculation exams in 2017 was also lower compared with the performance of the other districts: 4.10 vs. the national average of 4.22.

Burgas is still one of the districts where the number of teachers in primary and secondary education is lowest compared to the number of students, though in 2016 new teachers were employed in the district.

For yet another successive year the number of university students in the district has been going down, following the general tendency of shrinkage in admissions in the country.

Healthcare ●

In 2016, as before, the number of doctors relative to the population was considerably lower in the district than the national average. One GP in the district was responsible for 1,902 people, the national ratio being 1 GP for 1,611 people. One specialist doctor in the district was responsible for 622 people (vs. 530 on average in the country). At the same, time the number of health-insured people in the district of Burgas went on being considerably below average (84.3% vs. 88.1% nationally).

The shortage of doctors, the relatively low rate of health-insured people, and the relatively small hospital capacity explain the small number of hospitalizations relative to the population. The number of beds in general hospitals was 3.1 per 1,000 people (vs. 5.1 per 1,000 people for the country as a whole), whereas the number of hospitalizations reached 178 per 1,000 people vs. 235 people per 1,000 in the country in 2016.

Security and Justice ●

The district of Burgas has continued to perform poorly in security. In 2016, Burgas was again the district with the highest relative number of registered crimes against the person and property: 18.8 per 1,000 people vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people nationally. Burgas was also among the districts with the lowest crime clearance rate (lower only in the capital): only 38% of the crimes registered during the year were cleared (vs. 48% nationally).

The share of crime cases at the district court cleared within 3 months rose to 94% in 2016 (compared with 89% nationally) while the share of pending cases rose too to go above the national average.

Environment ●●●

The high urbanization in the district determines the relatively high share of people living in areas with access to sewerage systems, as well as the high connectivity with wastewater treatment plants. At the same time, in 2015 Burgas remained among the districts with the largest quantity of generated household waste: 519 kg/person (vs. 422 kg/person nationally), something typical for regions with a considerable number of tourist arrivals.

The air in the district is relatively pure, the carbon dioxide emissions being almost four times lower than national average levels.

Culture ●●

In recent years, a growing interest in theaters and cinemas has been noticeable in the district, the rates of visits relative to the population being comparable with national average figures. In 2016, visits to the cinema in the district of Burgas amounted to 800 per 1,000 people (vs. 778 per thousand people nationally). Visits to the theatre were 312 per 1,000 people (vs. 322 per 1,000 people nationally).

Museum visits in the district also increased, while staying below national average figures. In 2016, they reached 505 per 1,000 people (vs. 734 per 1,000 people nationally). The data on library visits in the district make an exception in terms of the general growth of other indicators. In 2016, they dropped to 117 per 1,000 people in the district (vs. 605 per 1,000 people in the country). In 2009 the difference between the number of visits in Burgas district and in the country was twofold, whereas in 2016 it became five-fold.

Key Indicators for the District of Burgas

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,619	9,646	9,846	8,714	10,310	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,374	3,702	4,234	4,182	4,275	4,592
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	7,359	7,788	8,212	8,834	9,102	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	15.6	19.4	21.4	22.4	19.5	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	63.3	64.8	67.5	67.8	69.4	69.9
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	55.3	57.3	58.9	60.3	62.2	63.6
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	12.6	11.5	12.7	11.0	10.3	9.0
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	17.3	18.6	20.2	18.8	19.3	23.1
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	62	65	67	69	71	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	2,379	3168	4,553	4,471	3,578	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	4,361	4,885	5,885	2,262	4,124	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	47.3	53.5	44.8	51.6	63.2	60.3
Share of roads in good condition (%)	22.1	29.0	27.1	35.0	39.5	42.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	16.2	16.3	16.3	16.3	20.7	22.0

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−3.0	−3.3	−3.0	−3.2	−3.4	−3.6
Net migration rate (‰)	0.7	−0.2	3.7	2.5	2.7	0.8
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.43	4.11	4.19	4.26	4.22	4.08
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	3.92	6.64	6.98	6.14	7.05	10.13
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	81.1	81.4	80.1	78.5	79.0	77.7
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	85.6	84.6	83.2	83.8	85.2	84.3
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	93.4	140.8	166.1	102.4	166.9	178.1
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	20.6	20.0	20.0	19.2	20.2	18.8
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	31.8	30.2	26.9	28.1	33.5	38.4
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	9.3	8.4	7.3	8.9	6.5	8.8
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	60.6	60.7	61.2	61.4	64.9	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	75.3	86.9	90.2	74.7	76.8	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	101	552	845	927	873	880
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	289	282	317	361	333	312

Dobrich District

▶ Population (2016)	179,520
▶ Area (sq. km)	4,719.7
▶ Number of settlements	215
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.0

Map labels: Krushari, TERVEL, GENERAL TOSHEVO, DOBRICH, SHABLA, BALCHIK, KAVARNA
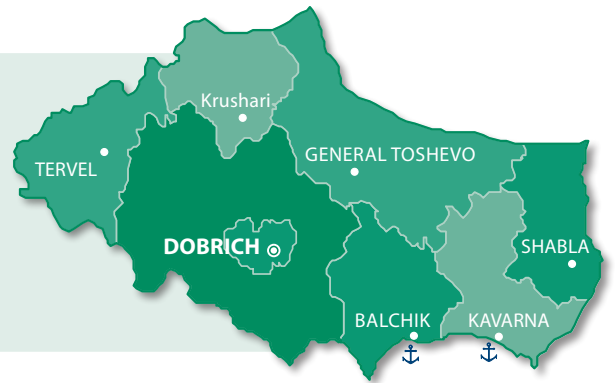
Overview

Although GDP as well as incomes and salaries in the district of Dobrich have kept growing, they have remained below national average figures. High employment and falling unemployment are due to the creation of new jobs. In comparison with the previous year investment activity is more intense, but is still catching up with national average figures. Despite the fact that there are resorts in the district the average real estate tax and the waste collection fee remain relatively low in it. The local administration is among the most transparent in the country; cadastral coverage is relatively high while the introduction of electronic government and one-stop shop services is making good progress. Population ageing in Dobrich is going fast. The educational system is unable to include a great part of those subject to education though its quality is close to the national average. The shortage of specialist doctors and the relatively limited access to hospital beds entail a hospitalization rate two times smaller than the national average. Administration of justice is relatively fast in the district. The intensity of cultural life is relatively low.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Scale: Weak | Unsatisfactory | Average | Good | Very good

- **Income and Living Conditions** — Good
- **Labor Market** — Good
- **Investment** — Good
- **Infrastructure** — Unsatisfactory
- **Taxes and Fees** — Unsatisfactory
- **Administration** — Average
- Very good

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Scale: Weak | Unsatisfactory | Average | Good | Very good

- **Demography** — Average
- **Education** — Average
- **Healthcare** — Weak
- **Security and Justice** — Unsatisfactory
- **Environment** — Good
- **Culture** — Average
- Unsatisfactory

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

GDP per capita went on growing in the district of Dobrich but its growth was below average in 2015 with 8,002 BGN/person while the national average rate was 12,339 BGN/person. Salary growth was close to the national average rate while still staying below it: the district's annual average salary was 8,084 BGN (vs. 10,535 BGN on average for the country).

While the previous three years saw generally no change in household incomes, in 2016 they registered a considerable growth to reach 4,901 BGN per household member and came somewhat closer to the national average of 5,167 BGN per household member.

The share of people living in material deprivation as well as that of the poor in the district were still lower than the average rates in 2015.

Labor Market ●●●●

After five years of growth, the economic activity in the district dropped for the second successive year in 2016 (69.2%) while still remaining above the national average of 68.7%.

Unemployment, too, went on decreasing to 9.5%, while staying above the national average rate of 7.7%. On the positive side, in 2016 this trend was accompanied by increasing employment, the rate of which reached 62.6%, its highest value for the last 15 years and approaching the national average rate.

The population's educational structure between ages 25 and 64 improved in 2016 but was still less favorable than it was in the country as a whole. The share of university graduates rose to 22.1% (vs. 27.7% nationally) and that of people with primary and lower education dropped to 21.0% (vs. 17.7% nationally).

Investment ●●

Investment activity in the district of Dobrich increased in 2015 compared to the previous year but it was still catching up with the national average values. There were 53 non-financial enterprises in the district per 1,000 people (vs. 55 per 1,000 people nationally) while the FTA acquisition expenses per capita rose slightly to reach 2,172 BGN/person but were still unable to compensate the drop from the crisis years.

What the district is most seriously lagging in is foreign investment per capita. In 2015 it grew almost twice the volume of 2014 (almost compensating for the drop in 2014) due to some large industrial projects. Yet, the cumulative level of 1,130 euro/person remained almost three times lower than the national average of 3,250 euro/person as of the end of 2015.

EU fund utilization in the district of Dobrich was also relatively low. The sums paid in the district as of 30th June 2017 amounted to 155 m BGN, or 865 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person nationally). The largest sums were paid to the municipality of the city of Dobrich and that of Balchik but they, too, were below 800 BGN, hence below the national average.

Infrastructure ●●

The district's railroad density is considerably below the national average. Road density is similar to the national figure but the share of highways and first class roads remains low (10%) compared to the national average of 19%. Still, in 2016 the share of road surfaces in good condition was comparable to that in the country.

The relative share of households with Internet access as well as that of persons who had used it increased – approaching the average values for the country in 2016.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●

In 2017 the municipalities of Balchik and Kavarna raised some of the local tax and fee rates but on the whole there was no significant difference from 2016. The retail license tax remained considerably below national average levels. Despite the fact that there are resorts in the district, the property tax and the waste collection fee remained relatively low. The vehicle tax and property transfer tax were higher.

Dobrich is one of the districts with the lowest tax for taxi passenger transportation: in all its municipalities the annual tax is 300 BGN while the national average rate is 525 BGN.

Administration ●●●●●

In 2017 the local administration again evaluated the development of electronic government and the availability of one-stop shop services considerably above the national average. The active transparency rating of local government in the district (66%) was also considerably higher than the national average of 59%. For one more successive year the most transparent municipal administrations were those of the city of Dobrich and that of Krushari (over 70%), while the least transparent one was Shabla (24%).

Dobrich was one of the few districts where all municipalities were covered by cadastral maps to some extent. In 2016 the share of covered territories remained 32.1% and though there was no improvement compared with 2009, it was still higher than the national average of 22.5%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●●

In 2016 population ageing was going at a fast rate in the district and the age dependency ratio (the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14) was higher than the national average ratio. The ageing of the local population was simultaneously due to a low birth rate and a high outmigration from the district. In 2016 the natural growth rate increased to −7.3% but was still lower than the national average rate of 6.0%, while the net migration rate kept dropping to reach −4.7%.

Following the general trend in the country, the urban population increased in Dobrich. Yet, it remained one of the districts with the lowest share of urban population: 69% while the national average was 73%, as well as the district with the lowest population density: 697 people/sq. km while the national average density was 1,548 people/sq. km.

Security and Justice ●●●●

The district of Dobrich is characterized by relatively speedy justice administration. In 2016 the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months rose to 95% (vs. 89% nationally) whereas pending cases dropped to under 4% (over 8% nationally). A possible explanation for this could be the relatively low workloads of judges in the district: a criminal judge in the district saw an average of 6.7 cases a month (vs. 9.4 cases nationally).

In 2016 Dobrich also registered its highest increase in the crime clearance rate: by almost 20 p.p. compared with 2015, to reach 56% (vs. 48% on average in the country). The rate of registered crimes (12.0 per 1,000 people), on the other hand, was once again close to the average national rate of 12.6 per 1,000 people.

Education ●

The district's performance in this category positioned it at the bottom of the national ranking; only the district of Sliven did worse.

Dobrich went on being the district with the lowest net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade; after a new drop in 2016 to 68.3% (vs. 78.2% nationally) it went on being the only district with a rate under 70%. The shares of dropouts and repeaters in primary and secondary education in the district remained almost twice the national average rates.

On the other hand, school leavers in the district once again performed relatively well at the matriculation exams in 2017. The average grade at the exam in BLL was 4.16 (vs. 4.22 nationally) while poor grades were 4.3% (vs. 8% nationally).

Environment ●●●

Dobrich remains one of the districts with the lowest carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere: dozens of times lower than national average figures per territory. Household waste, on the other hand, is still above average levels which can partly be accounted for by the resorts located in the district.

The positive evaluation of the district in this category was influenced by the relatively high share of population with access to sewerage systems and its connectivity to wastewater treatment plants: 70.7% (vs. 62.3% nationally). Yet, despite the fact that the entire sewerage network in the district is connected with wastewater treatment plants, the number of people with access to sewerage (70.7%) was still relatively small compared with the national average rate of 75.5% in 2015.

Healthcare ●●

The share of health-insured people in the district remained relatively low: 85% (vs. 88% nationally) in 2016. Dobrich was still among the districts with the acutest specialist shortage. There were 826 people per specialist (vs. 530 nationally); the number of hospital beds increased but remained considerably below average: 2.7 beds per 1,000 people in the district vs. 5.1 beds per 1,000 people nationwide.

The shortage of specialist doctors and the limited number of hospital beds entailed a hospitalization rate twice lower than the national average rate. In 2016 there were 126 hospitalizations per 1,000 people (vs. 235 per 1,000 people nationally).

Culture ●●

After continuously dropping in the last few years, in 2016 museum visits in the district were on the rise again and placed Dobrich among the first five of the districts with the highest interest in local museums (over 1,400 visits per 1,000 people).

At the same time, theater visits went on dropping, whereas interest in local libraries was revived. However, the district remained way below national average rates in both indicators.

Dobrich registered an almost double increase in cinema visits: from 120 per 1,000 people in 2015 to 219 per 1,000 people in 2016, though that figure was still way below the national average rate of 778 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Dobrich

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,273	7,489	7,788	7,827	8,002	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,994	3,856	4,166	4,091	4,049	4,901
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,394	6,738	7,164	7,581	8,084	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	23.0	20.0	19.9	16.8	17.8	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.0	69.0	70.7	71.5	70.8	69.2
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	54.4	58.3	59.4	61.2	60.9	62.6
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	17.3	15.4	15.8	14.3	13.8	9.5
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	18.4	18.3	18.4	18.4	19.4	22.1
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	48	48	51	51	53	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,975	1,756	2,052	2,026	2,172	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,236	1,398	1,616	607	1,130	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	36.2	49.7	54.1	49.6	58.5	65.6
Share of roads in good condition (%)	45.2	46.0	45.8	39.3	40.0	42.1
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−5.7	−6.8	−6.7	−7.4	−8.5	−7.3
Net migration rate (‰)	−3.7	−2.5	−2.8	−2.8	−3.7	−4.7
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.41	4.21	4.29	4.29	4.26	4.25
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	2.63	3.20	4.10	2.89	2.85	3.78
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	83.4	81.8	79.2	76.4	74.6	68.3
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	86.6	85.4	84.0	84.6	85.9	85.3
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	131.5	136.5	134.1	134.5	128.5	125.5
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.0	12.6	13.5	13.7	13.1	12.0
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	39.4	38.4	35.2	32.8	36.5	56.0
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	7.4	7.3	7.2	11.2	7.0	3.6
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	69.4	70.7	70.8	70.9	70.7	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	20.2	4.3	5.2	5.9	4.8	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	65	24	28	125	120	219
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	214	205	245	261	240	232

Gabrovo District

▶ Population (2016)	113,303
▶ Area (sq. km)	2,023.0
▶ Number of settlements	356
▶ Share of urban population (%)	81.8

SEVLIEVO
DRYANOVO
GABROVO
TRYAVNA

Overview

Economic indicators place Gabrovo among the top ranking districts in Bulgaria. GDP and salaries in the district have kept growing; the labor market has retained a positive trend while local and foreign investment has been increasing. All monitored taxes and fees in the district's municipalities, without exception, have maintained average rates lower than the national average figures. The district ranks first in the country in local government transparency.

The rapid population ageing is due to both a low birth rate and outmigration. The average grade in 2017 BLL matriculation exams was a little above the national average. The relative state of healthcare in the district can be evaluated as very good. The district is also characterized by a relatively high crime clearance rate. Besides, Gabrovo is one of the most highly urbanized districts which explains both the high share of people with access to public sewerage and the relatively intense cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
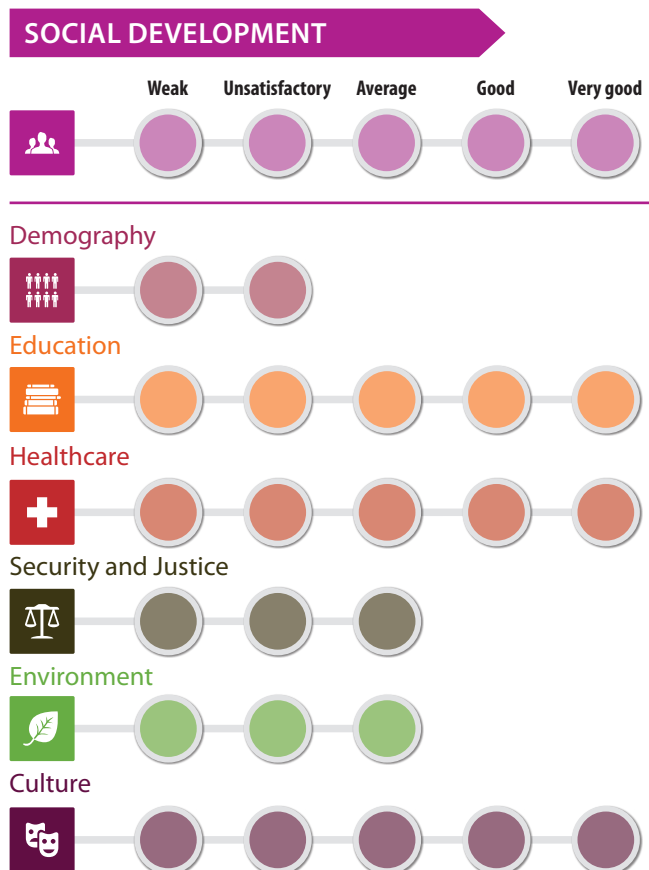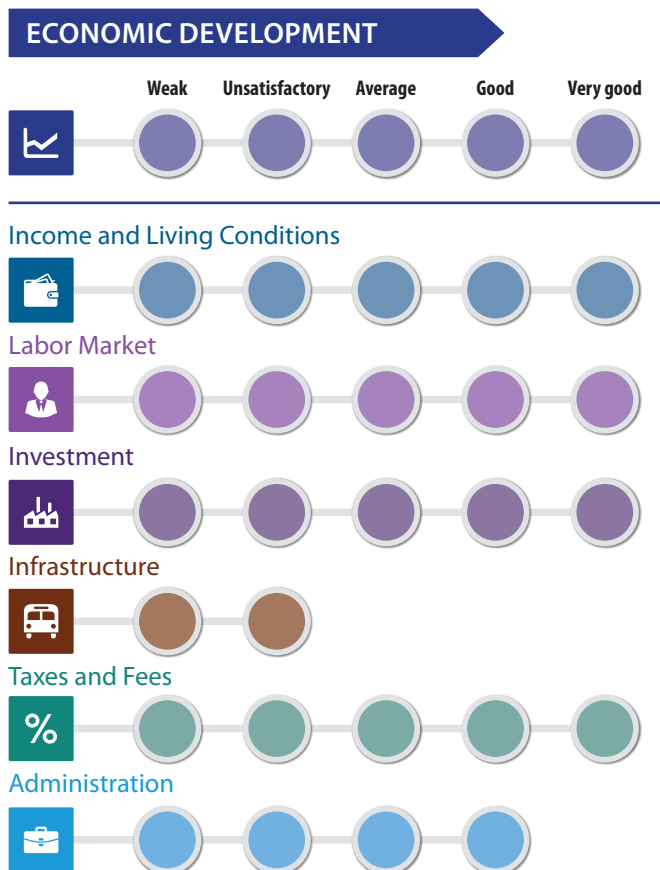
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ● ● ● ● ●

Income and Living Conditions ● ● ● ● ●

Indicators in this category place Gabrovo among the top ranking districts in Bulgaria: immediately after the capital and Stara Zagora. Wealth and salaries in the district increased in 2015: GDP reached 10,358 BGN/person while it was 12,339 BGN/person for the country as a whole. The annual average net salary reached 8,826 BGN (vs. 10,535 nationally). In 2016 household incomes also grew considerably to reach 5,728 BGN/person (vs. 5,167 BGN/person nationally).

The district's share of people living in material deprivation (21.4%) remained among the lowest in the country (31.9% nationally) while that of people living below the national poverty line was 14.9% (vs. 22.9% nationally) in 2015.

Labor Market ● ● ● ● ●

The district of Gabrovo continued its good performance in the labor market with a ranking immediately after the capital and Varna. In 2016 again, economic activity in the district was still among the highest in the country despite a drop to 72.2% (vs. 68.7% nationally). At the same time employment kept growing to reach 67.7% (vs. 63.4% nationally) while unemployment dropped to 6.3% (vs. 7.7% nationally).

The district's industrial profile determines the educational status of the workforce. The share of people aged 25–64 with secondary general and secondary specialized education is 66% (vs. 55% nationally). The share (8%) of people with primary or lower education is two times lower than the national average of 18%.

Despite the negative demographic processes in the district, an improvement in the demographic replacement ratio (the ratio between the population aged 15–19 and that aged 60–64) was noticeable in 2016. However, at 48.3%, it remained way below the national average figure of 62.8%, which indicates certain negative prospects for workforce reproduction.

Investment ● ● ● ● ●

Investment in Gabrovo kept increasing in 2015, though no drastic increase was noticeable. FTA acquisition expenditure reached 2,648 BGN/person (vs. 2,973 BGN/person nationally) while the cumulative FDI rose to almost 300 m euro by the end of 2015 or 2,510 euro/person (vs. 3,520 euro/person nationally).

As of 30th June 2017 the sums paid from operational programs in the district reached 271 m BGN or 2,395 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person nationally), which once again placed Gabrovo second after the capital in utilization of

EU funds relative to the population. The Gabrovo city municipality utilized the largest sums of EU funds (3,385 BGN/person) while the municipality of Dryanovo utilized the smallest (569 BGN/person), though that figure, too, was way above most municipalities in Bulgaria.

Infrastructure ● ●

Road density in the district is higher than the national average. The share of first class roads (17.1%), however, is below the national average of 18.6%.

In 2016 road surface quality worsened and the share of roads in good condition – 34.1% – remained way below the national average of 41.5%.

The share of households with Internet access as well as that of people who used the Internet in 2016 increased but they were still relatively low.

% Taxes and Fees ● ● ● ● ●

The average rates of absolutely all monitored taxes and fees in the district's municipalities were below the national average figures. What is more, no municipality of Gabrovo changed its rates in 2017. Gabrovo was the only district in the country besides Sofia (capital city) with unchanged rates in 2017.

The annual license tax for retailers and the household waste collection fee for non-residential property of legal entities were considerably below national average.

Administration ● ● ● ●

For yet another year the district of Gabrovo had evaluations for development of electronic government and the availability of one-stop shop services close to the national average figures in 2017. The district also held the first place in the country for the highest transparency of local government with a rating of 69.6% while the national average rate was 59.0%. The municipalities with the highest rating in the district once again were those of Gabrovo and Sevlievo.

The share of the district's territory covered by cadastral maps has stayed unchanged since 2014, so in 2016 it was still 21.3% (vs. 22.5% nationally). All municipalities in the district have some proportion of cadastral coverage.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

Demography ●●

For the second successive year Gabrovo had the worst age dependency ratio (the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14), which reached 245.5% while the national average ratio was 147.1%.

The rapid population ageing in the district was determined by a low birth rate and by outmigration. In 2016 the natural growth rate went on falling to reach –12.7‰, which was two times lower than the national average of –6‰. The net migration rate rose in 2015, though it retained its negative value of –4.4‰.

Gabrovo was one of the most highly urbanized districts in 2016: with an 81.8% share of urban population it ranked third after the capital and the district of Varna. Population density was still lower than the national average figure, however.

Education ●●●●●

Gabrovo's net enrolment rate of 77.5% in 5th–8th grade was close to the national average in 2016. The share of repeaters and that of dropouts from primary and secondary school were more favorable than the national average values.

The average grade of 4.17 at the matriculation exam in BLL in 2017 was still slightly below the national average of 4.22; the share of fail grades was also lower: less than 7% while the national average rate was 8%.

In contrast to the growth from the last few years, the number of university students in Gabrovo slightly shrank in 2016, following the general downward trend in the country. 6,454 students were enrolled in 2016 or 57 per 1,000 people while the national average was 34 per 1,000 people.

Healthcare ●●●●●

The relative state of healthcare in the district can be evaluated as very good. The number of health-insured people rose in 2016 and the district retained its position among the leaders in the country in terms of the share of health-insured population. Probably this is a reflection of ageing trends accelerating and the fact that retired people have health insurance from the state. The number of doctors is quite impressive: 1,479 people per GP in 2016 while the national average rate was 1,611 per GP and 468 people per specialist (vs. 530 on average nationally).

The number of hospital beds dropped in 2016 and remained slightly below the national average but hospitalizations kept a relatively high level, indicating trust in local

hospitals. That was probably due to the high availability of specialists in the district.

Security and Justice ●●●

In 2016 Gabrovo still had a high rate of crime clearance (62%) compared to the national average rate of 48% though the crime rate rose, overtaking the national average level.

The speed of justice administration, on the other hand, was not much different from the average levels despite the relatively low workloads of local courts. In 2016 a criminal judge in the district saw an average of 7.1 cases a month, while the national average was 9.4 cases a month. The share of pending cases rose to 8.2% (vs. 8.3% nationally) while that of cases closed within three months dropped by 3 p.p. to 92% (vs. 89% in the country).

Environment ●●●

The relatively high proportion of urban population in the district can explain the high shares of people with access to public sewerage systems (85.1% vs. 75.5% nationally). Connectivity with wastewater treatment plants was also quite considerable in 2015: 74.4% vs. 62.3% nationally.

On the other hand, carbon dioxide air pollution in the district was over ten times lower than the national average level.

In 2015 the district registered an increase in generated household waste to 609 kg/person annually while the national average was 422 kg/person.

Culture ●●●●●

The fact that a considerable part of the population is concentrated in towns contributed to the relatively high intensity of cultural life in the district of Gabrovo, holding second place in the country.

Gabrovo was once again the district with the highest rate of museum visits: 3,395 visits per 1,000 people while the national average was 734. Visits to local theaters (405 per 1,000 people) were also above the national average of 322 per 1,000 people. After a considerable rise in library visits in 2016, the district was ahead of national figures in this indicator too: its annual average of library visits reached 1,017 per 1,000 people while the national average rate was 605 per 1,000 people.

The only indicator in this category, for which Gabrovo figures lagged behind, was cinema visits relative to the population though it also registered some increase in 2016.

Key Indicators for the District of Gabrovo

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,876	9,208	9,037	9,833	10,358	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,351	4,408	4,858	4,787	5,102	5,728
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,827	7,399	7,912	8,283	8,826	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	25.0	24.6	12.8	13.0	14.9	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.0	68.0	72.2	72.1	73.0	72.2
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	59.6	61.4	65.8	66.1	67.4	67.6
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	9.9	9.6	8.8	8.1	7.5	6.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	25.0	25.1	24.9	26.3	26.8	25.9
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	48	48	48	48	51	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,345	1,181	1,534	2,598	2,648	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	2,224	2,245	2,139	2,261	2,510	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	39.8	34.8	48.2	64.4	49.4	54.3
Share of roads in good condition (%)	31.4	32.0	36.4	41.5	42.2	34.1
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	21.2	21.2	21.2	21.3	21.3	21.3

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−9.7	−11.2	−10.7	−11.6	−12.5	−12.7
Net migration rate (‰)	−2.2	−0.9	−3.6	−4.8	−5.5	−4.4
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.46	4.24	4.27	4.37	4.23	4.12
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	4.17	4.70	3.73	4.32	6.60	7.08
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	79.5	78.5	78.3	77.6	78.7	77.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	94.2	93.5	92.7	94.0	95.5	96.1
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	201.2	239.3	261.5	246.2	258.4	256.1
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	15.7	14.1	14.1	12.7	13.5	13.8
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	55.6	61.7	56.7	52.2	51.2	61.7
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.4	6.6	7.6	12.1	6.2	8.2
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	66.6	66.7	66.8	66.8	74.4	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	41.1	35.3	30.7	31.0	25.7	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	103	69	154	145	379	391
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	293	293	322	399	370	405

Haskovo District

▸ Population (2016)	234,899
▸ Area (sq. km)	5,533.3
▸ Number of settlements	261
▸ Share of urban population (%)	72.2

DIMITROVGRAD
SIMEONOVGRAD
Mineralni bani
HASKOVO
HARMANLI
LYUBIMETS
TOPOLOVGRAD
Stambolovo
SVILENGRAD
MADZHAROVO
IVAYLOVGRAD

Overview

After hesitant growth in GDP per capita in the district of Haskovo, in 2015 it grew considerably to overtake the national average rate. Employment was on the rise and unemployment dropped. Haskovo was still one of the districts to attract least investment. A considerable rise in Internet access and usage was also registered in the district. In 2017 the average rates of local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities remained close to national average rates.

Natural increase in the district has traditionally been lower than the national average; in 2016 there was a new wave of emigration from the district which was a setback on the population's age structure. Student performance at matriculation exams has remained poor. Healthcare is characterized by relatively low capacity of medical facilities and doctor shortages. Administration of justice in the district is relatively speedy with above-average crime clearance rates. The intensity of cultural life in the district is relatively low.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Income and Living Conditions
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Labor Market
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Investment
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Infrastructure
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Taxes and Fees
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Administration
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Demography
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Education
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Healthcare
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Security and Justice
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Environment
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Culture
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●

After a period of hesitant GDP growth since 2009, in 2015 it grew considerably to overtake the national average rate. Still, its value remained below average: 7,001 BGN/person (vs. 12,339 BGN/person nationally). Salaries and incomes in the district also kept growing without reaching national average levels: the difference was significant in the average salary. In 2015 its annual size in Haskovo reached 7,422 BGN (vs. 10,535 BGN nationally).

Increasing incomes and salaries in the district led to improving conditions and living standards. In 2015 the relative share of the population living in material deprivation declined to 27% (vs. 32% in the country). At the same time, however, the share of population living below the national poverty line (30%) remained above the national average rate of 23%.

Labor Market ●●●●

In 2016 once again the population's economic activity in the district – 69.2% – remained close to the national average of 68.7%; this rate went through little change in the last few years. In the meantime, employment kept growing while unemployment declined reaching levels more favorable than the national average. In 2016 the employment rate in the district was 64.2% (vs. 63.4% nationally) while the unemployment rate was 7.1% (vs. 7.7% nationally).

Further improvement of the labor market indicators is likely to be hampered by the worsened educational structure of the population aged 25–64. In 2016 the share of university graduates in the district shrank to 17% (vs. 28% nationally) and the share of people with primary or lower education rose slightly to 23% (vs. 18% in the country).

Investment ●●

Haskovo remains among the districts that attract least investment. As of the end of 2015 FDI in the district increased to reach a cumulative 100 m or 448 euro/person – far from the national average rate of 3,250 euro/person.

FTA expenditures and absorbed EU funds have also lagged behind national average rates. As of 30th June 2017 sums paid in the district from operational programs amounted to 896 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person nationally). The municipality with most utilized funds in the district was once again that of Svilengrad while the ones with least funds were those of Simeonovgrad and Topolovgrad.

Infrastructure ●●●●

The density of the road network in the district of Haskovo was above average in 2015. The launching that year of the "Maritsa" highway, which is connected with the "Trakiya" highway, increased the share of highways and first class roads in the district to 22% (vs. 19% nationally). That led to increased road quality in the district. In 2016 the share of road surfaces in good condition reached 34% which was far from the national average of 42%.

In 2016 a considerable increase was registered in Internet access and usage and the levels of both indicators overtook the national average rates.

% Taxes and Fees ●●

In 2017 the average rates of local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities remained close to the national average figures except for the waste collection fee which was relatively high. No municipality raised local taxes and fees from 2016 levels.

The annual license tax for retailers and the tax on immovable property of legal entities were slightly below average, whereas the local vehicle tax was higher. The rate of the tax on property transfer in the district reached the national average level in 2017. The tax on taxi transport (340 BGN) was considerably lower than the national average rate of 525 BGN.

Administration ●●●

The administration's self-evaluation for development of electronic government and provided one-stop shop services were close to national average ones in 2017. The transparency rating of municipal authorities was also close to average. In 2017 the average grade for the district was 58% while the national average was 59%. The most transparent municipalities in the district were Dimitrovgrad, Svilengrad and Haskovo (over 60%), whereas the least transparent were Madzharovo, Mineralni Bani and Stambolovo (under 40%).

In 2016 cadastral map coverage in the district increased with the inclusion of part of the territory of the Svilengrad municipality but Haskovo remained among the three districts (alongside Kardzhali and Pernik) with the lowest share of its territory included in cadastral maps: 5.9% vs. 22.5% nationally). Six of all eleven municipalities have no coverage at all yet.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●

Demography ●●●

In the last three years the natural growth rate in the district has stayed below the national average level fluctuating somewhere around –8‰ with the national average rate at around –6‰. In 2016 a new wave of outmigration from the district was also registered which made the net migration rate negative once again despite having maintained positive values in the previous two years. Those processes affected the population age structure in 2016 and the age dependency ratio as a ratio of people aged 15–64 to those aged 0–14 reached 154% (vs. 147% nationally). The age dependency ratio as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 15–64 reached 34% (vs. 32% nationally).

The share of urban population in the district is close to the average in the country though population density remains considerably lower.

Education ●●

In 2016 the share of children enrolled in 5th–8th grade in the district rose again after a decline the previous year and managed to overtake the national average rates. However, a considerable rise in the share of repeaters was registered at the same time. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education kept rising for the third successive year reaching 3.5% (vs. 2.9% nationally) in 2015. Haskovo remains one of the districts with the fewest teachers relative to the number of students.

The performance of students at matriculation exams continued to be relatively poor. In 2017 the district's average grade for the exam in BLL was 4.0 (vs. 4.22 nationally), while the share of poor grades was almost two times higher.

In 2016 the branches in the district of two universities had 266 students.

Healthcare ●

Haskovo has continued to be one of the districts with relatively limited capacity of medical facilities. The relative shortage of doctors, specialists in particular, also affected the district's rating. In 2016 there were 1,704 people per GP (vs. 1,611 per GP in the country) and 714 people per specialist (vs. 530 in the country). The number of hospital beds has also been on the increase though it is still considerably below average: in 2016 in the district's general hospitals there were 3.4 beds per 1,000 people while there were 5.1 beds per 1,000 people in the country.

The limited hospital capacity as well as the limited number of medical specialists determined the relatively small number of patients in general hospitals: 203 per 1,000 people (vs. 235 per 1,000 people in the country).

Security and Justice ●●●

In 2016 once again the local court's workload kept increasing and was above the national average level. A criminal judge from the district court in Haskovo saw an average of 11.4 cases a month while the national average rate was 9.4 cases a month. Nevertheless, the speed of justice administration in the district was still above the national average: the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 92% (vs. 89% in the country) and the share of pending cases was below 7% (vs. over 8% nationally).

The relative share of registered crimes in the district retained its level in the last 4 years while it was dropping steadily in the country. Registered crimes in Haskovo, however, stayed below average: 11.1 per 1,000 people vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people in the country in 2016. Clearance rates continued to rise meanwhile, reaching 57% in Haskovo and 48% in the country.

Environment ●●●●

Between 2011 and 2015 three wastewater treatment plants were launched in the district (in Dimitrovgrad, Haskovo, and Svilengrad) and the population's access to sewerage connected with wastewater treatment plants increased to 54.5% in 2015 though it was still below the national average rate of 62.3%. The share of people living in areas with public sewerage systems was also below average: 72.2% – 75.5% nationally.

Air pollution kept decreasing in 2015. Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere relative to the territory were almost three times lower than the national average rate. Generated household waste was also considerably below average.

Culture ●

The intensity of cultural life in the district was relatively poor. The rates of cinema, theater, museum and library visits were below national average figures in 2016 once again. What is more, interest in theaters, museums and libraries in the district registered a certain decline in comparison to 2015.

The only indicator which kept rising was that on cinema visits and they reached 34,000 but their relative number of 145 visits per 1,000 people remained considerably below the national average of 778 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Haskovo

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,158	6,366	6,169	6,412	7,001	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,708	3,855	4,130	4,157	4,321	4,861
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,999	6,267	6,581	6,947	7,422	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	21.1	22.0	19.8	31.3	29.8	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	64.6	64.7	68.2	69.2	69.0	69.2
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	54.3	55.0	58.4	61.9	63.1	64.2
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	15.9	14.9	14.3	10.4	8.6	7.1
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	17.1	18.5	20.3	19.3	18.7	17.2
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	46	46	47	47	48	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	784	1,612	867	1,347	1,227	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	420	388	309	257	448	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	41.3	47.5	54.2	57.5	54.2	66.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	42.0	44.0	33.6	30.0	33.1	34.2
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	5.9

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−6.6	−6.7	−6.8	−8.0	−7.9	−7.7
Net migration rate (‰)	−4.0	−2.8	−3.1	1.0	2.5	−4.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.31	4.08	4.14	4.13	4.14	3.98
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	7.22	8.36	7.29	7.45	9.16	12.61
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	82.3	82.9	81.6	80.5	77.8	79.0
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.3	87.5	86.2	87.3	89.1	88.8
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	147.4	180.4	197.9	188.1	198.0	202.5
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.8	10.4	11.0	11.2	12.1	11.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	40.8	42.8	36.3	41.9	48.4	56.9
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.4	8.2	7.2	13.3	7.1	6.8
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	46.7	46.7	46.9	46.7	54.5	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	196.3	150.3	203.5	183.2	125.8	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	23	69	53	46	105	145
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	203	211	238	221	302	228

Kardzhali District

- ▸ Population (2016) — 151,078
- ▸ Area (sq. km) — 3,209.1
- ▸ Number of settlements — 472
- ▸ Share of urban population (%) — 41.2

Chernoochene

KARDZHALI

ARDINO

MOMCHILGRAD

DZHEBEL

KRUMOVGRAD

Kirkovo

Overview

In the district of Kardzhali, GDP per capita and salaries have increased at a rate close to the national average, while remaining among the lowest in the country. The problematic low economic activity and employment have been determined to some extent by the exceptionally unfavorable educational structure of the population. Kardzhali is still the district with the lowest number of enterprises relative to the population. Infrastructure, too, has failed to make conditions in the district more favorable. Electronic government, cadastral coverage, and administrative transparency are the other indicators with very low rates of development.

Population ageing has continued in the district of Kardzhali but the age structure of the district's population has remained more favorable than the national average level. For a third successive year, in 2017 the district's performance at state matriculation exams was exceptionally poor. The administration of justice is characterized by relatively low workloads for judges and a relatively speedy process. Kardzhali is one of the districts with the least polluted air. Its relatively low level of urbanization explains the considerably smaller share of people with access to sewerage systems. Kardzhali is the district with the least intensive cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Income and Living Conditions

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Labor Market

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Investment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Infrastructure

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Taxes and Fees

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Administration

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Demography

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Education

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Healthcare

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Security and Justice

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	●

Environment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Culture

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and Living Conditions

After a difficult period of crisis and recovery, in 2015 both GDP per capita and salaries grew at rates close to the national average, while remaining among the lowest in the country. GDP reached 6,472 BGN/person while its national average value of 12,339 BGN/person was almost two times higher. The annual average gross salary rose to 7,648 BGN while the national average was 10,535 BGN.

Incomes in the district rose to 3,887 BGN/household member in 2016 – following a drop in the previous year but they, too, remained considerably below the national average level of 5,167 BGN/household member.

Low salaries and income placed Kardzhali among the districts with the highest shares of both people living in material deprivation and those below the poverty line. In 2015 those living in poverty in the district were 43.3% or twice as many as the national average.

Labor Market

Kardzhali remained one of the districts with the lowest economic activity. In 2016 it slightly rose to 61% vs. 69% nationally. Employment also rose to 60% but failed to compensate the drop from the previous year and also remained below the national average. Unemployment kept falling and was once again the lowest in the country though that was due to low economic activity.

The problems concerning both low economic activity and employment in the district were partly determined by the exceptionally unfavorable population structure between ages 25 and 64. The share of university graduates went on dropping to reach 15% in 2016, while the national average share was 28%, which placed Kardzhali last among Bulgarian districts. At the same time, the share of people in the same age group with primary or lower education (30% vs. 18% nationally), though decreasing, was among the highest in the country.

Investment

In 2015, too, Kardzhali remained the district with the lowest number of enterprises relative to the population: 31 per 1,000 people (vs. 55 per 1,000 people nationally). This was also one of the few districts in the country in which FTA expenditures dropped in 2015, though that was yet another year when their rate was over twice lower than the national average. Foreign investment in the district went on rising to reach a cumulative value of 1,267 euro/person, while the national average was 3,250 euro/person.

As of 30th June 2017 utilized EU funds in the district (975 BGN/person) remained below the national average rate of 1,344 BGN/person. The largest sums from operational programs were paid to beneficiaries in the municipalities of the city of Kardzhali and Momchilgrad (about 1,200 BGN/person), while the smallest (141 BGN/person) were paid in the municipality of Krumovgrad.

Infrastructure

Kardzhali's performance in this category placed it last among Bulgarian districts. The district's location in the country's periphery as well as its mostly mountainous relief account for the low railroad network density (2.1 km/100 sq. km vs. 3.6 km/100 sq. km nationally) and the relatively small share of highways and first class roads (11.1% vs. 18.6% nationally).

Besides, the district was characterized by a relatively low quality of road surfaces: in 2016, 30% of the roads in the district were in good condition (vs. 42% nationally).

In 2016 Kardzhali remained among the districts with the lowest shares of households with Internet access (57% vs. 64% nationally) and persons using the Internet (45% vs. 63% nationally).

Taxes and Fees

On the whole, no raises of the tax burden were noticeable in the district in 2017, contrary to the general tendency in the country. The Kardzhali municipality was the only one that raised the rate of the vehicle tax. The rates of taxes on immovable property of legal entities, on retail trade, and on property transfers were below the average for the country, whereas the vehicle tax (due to the above-mentioned raise in Kardzhali) and the waste collection fee were above national average rates.

The district's average tax rate for taxi transport was also below the national average.

Administration

The low Internet usage and Internet connectivity of the population also partly account for the fact that Kardzhali is one of the districts with the slowest development of electronic government. Providing one-stop shop services has also been lagging, and so has administration transparency. The active transparency rating of local government evaluated the district at 44% (vs. 59% nationally). The lowest results of slightly over 30% were in the municipalities of Ardino and Momchilgrad, while the highest – over 50% – was in Kirkovo and Krumovgrad.

Kardzhali also remained the district with the lowest share of its territory covered by cadastral maps: in 2016, 3.4% were covered while the national average was 22.5%. The municipalities of Ardino, Momchilgrad and Chernoochene still have 0% coverage.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●●●

In 2016 population ageing in the district continued following the general tendency in the country. Nevertheless, Kardzhali remained one of the districts where the age structure of the population was relatively favorable: both age dependency ratios were below national average figures.

In 2016 Kardzhali district registered better values than the rest of the country in both natural growth and net migration rates. The natural growth rate increased slightly to −3.3‰ which was again almost twice the national average rate (−6.0‰), while the net migration rate rose to reach 0.1‰, which indicates that those settling in the district slightly exceeded those moving out.

The district had the lowest rate of urban population (41.2%) once again in 2016 when the national average was 73.3%. Population density, on the other hand, was relatively high.

Education ●●

In 2016 the share of students enrolled in 5th–8th grade in the district rose for the first time in four years – 77.8%, to almost reach the national average of 78.2%. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education in the district fell in 2015, thus Kardzhali kept its position among the districts with the lowest share of dropouts (1.8% vs. 2.9% nationally) and repeaters (0.4% vs. 1.1% nationally).

In 2017, for the third year in a row, the district's performance at matriculation exams was exceptionally poor. The average grade in BLL for the district was 3.77 (vs. 4.22 nationally), which made Kardzhali the district with the lowest average grades. At the same time, the share of poor grades rose once again, making Kardzhali the district with the largest number of fail grades (20.69% vs. 7.98% nationally) for the second year in a row.

Healthcare ●●●

Kardzhali had one of the most serious shortages of doctors in Bulgaria in 2016 as well. There were 2,394 people per GP (vs. 1,611 people nationally), while there were 782 people per specialist (vs. 530 people nationally). The number of beds in general hospitals in the district (3.7 per 1,000 people) was also low compared with the national average of 5.1 per 1000 people.

That resulted in local people searching for medical care outside the district; it also explains the relatively low number of hospitalizations in the local hospitals – 168 per 1,000 people (vs. 235 nationally).

Security and Justice ●●●●●

Administration of justice in the district of Kardzhali was characterized by relatively low judge workloads and relatively speedy process in 2016. Criminal judges at the district court saw 6.9 cases a month (vs. 9.4 cases/month per judge nationally). The share of cases closed within 3 months rose to 96% (vs. 89% nationally) while that of pending cases shrank to 6% (vs. 8% nationally).

The relative share of crimes against the person and property registered in the district in 2016 (6.1 per 1,000 people) was once again over two times lower than the national average of 12.6 per 1,000 people. At the same time, crime clearance rates (63%) continued to be considerably higher than the national average of 48%.

Environment ●●

In 2015 Kardzhali remained one of the districts with the lowest air pollution once again: carbon dioxide emissions relative to the territory were 50 times lower than national average values. Generated household waste in the district was also among the lowest in volume at 279 kg/person annually (vs. 422 kg/person nationally).

The relatively low urbanization rate in 2015 was the reason for the considerably lower share of people with sewerage access (43.6%) in the district while the national average share was 75.5%. After the construction of the wastewater treatment plant the share of population connected to wastewater treatment reached 37.7%: still far below the national average value of 62.3%.

Culture ●

The relatively low intensity of cultural life in Kardzhali positioned the district in the last place in the category in 2016, which could be accounted for by relatively low urbanization. There is still not a single cinema in the district, and visits to local theaters (149 per 1,000 people) were over two times fewer than the national average figure of 322 per 1,000 people.

Interest in the district's museums has decreased in recent years, although it registered some growth in the last year. In 2016 museum visits reached 105 per 1,000 people but remained far below the average of 734 per 1,000 people for the country.

Library visits in the district were also relatively low despite an increase in 2016 and despite the fact that this indicator had the highest value in the category: 422 visits per 1,000 people (vs. 605 per 1,000 people nationally).

Key Indicators for the District of Kardzhali

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,665	6,338	6,189	6,067	6,472	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,002	3,483	3,333	3,762	3,393	3,887
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,895	6,266	6,842	7,222	7,648	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	31.9	44.7	60.1	54.8	43.3	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	54.3	60.6	63.4	64.3	60.3	61.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	51.5	55.1	59.0	61.1	58.8	60.0
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	5.1	9.0	7.0	4.9	2.3	1.7
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	8.9	11.2	15.6	19.8	17.2	15.0
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	29	29	29	30	31	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	613	738	705	1,240	1,332	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	500	604	748	951	1,167	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	29.7	54.0	45.8	65.8	51.2	57.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	24.6	27.0	25.5	31.3	27.5	30.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−2.6	−2.1	−1.8	−2.6	−3.4	−3.3
Net migration rate (‰)	−3.5	−2.4	−3.0	12.1	−1.4	0.1
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.51	4.48	4.60	4.71	4.06	3.85
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	2.97	4.23	4.75	3.05	11.38	16.89
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	83.0	82.0	80.2	78.3	77.6	77.8
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	101.6	100.6	100.4	101.5	103.5	104.4
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	144.4	166.4	175.9	165.0	177.4	167.7
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	6.9	6.0	5.8	5.7	5.6	6.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	57.3	56.2	53.4	49.4	56.5	63.0
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	4.8	4.7	3.8	8.7	10.0	6.4
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.9	37.7	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	10.9	3.5	5.1	5.8	6.5	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	170	191	159	131	150	149

Kyustendil District

▶ Population (2016)	124,723
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,051.5
▶ Number of settlements	183
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.3

Treklyano

KYUSTENDIL ◎ Bobov dol

SAPAREVA BANYA

NEVESTINO DUPNITSA

BOBOSHEVO

KOCHERINOVO RILA

Overview

Kyustendil's economy has been on the rise in recent years though incomes and salaries have been lagging behind national average levels. The labor market has shown some positive tendencies while population ageing and depopulation have been a negative influence. Both local and foreign investment in the district has been relatively low while EU funds have been relatively poorly utilized. Local administration performance and the availability of its services have retained an unsatisfactory level despite the considerably lower local taxes and fees compared with the national average level.

Population ageing and depopulation have been particularly intensive in the district in the last few years. High school students' matriculation results have been improving while still remaining below the national average rates. Local courts have had traditionally high workloads and that has affected the speed of justice administration. Air pollution continues to be a problem in the district. Cultural life has a relatively low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Income and Living Conditions

| | ● | ● | ● | | |

Labor Market

| | ● | ● | ● | ● | |

Investment

| | ● | | | | |

Infrastructure

| | ● | ● | | | |

Taxes and Fees

| | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |

Administration

| | ● | ● | | | |

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Demography

| | ● | ● | | | |

Education

| | ● | ● | ● | ● | |

Healthcare

| | ● | ● | ● | | |

Security and Justice

| | ● | | | | |

Environment

| | ● | ● | ● | | |

Culture

| | ● | | | | |
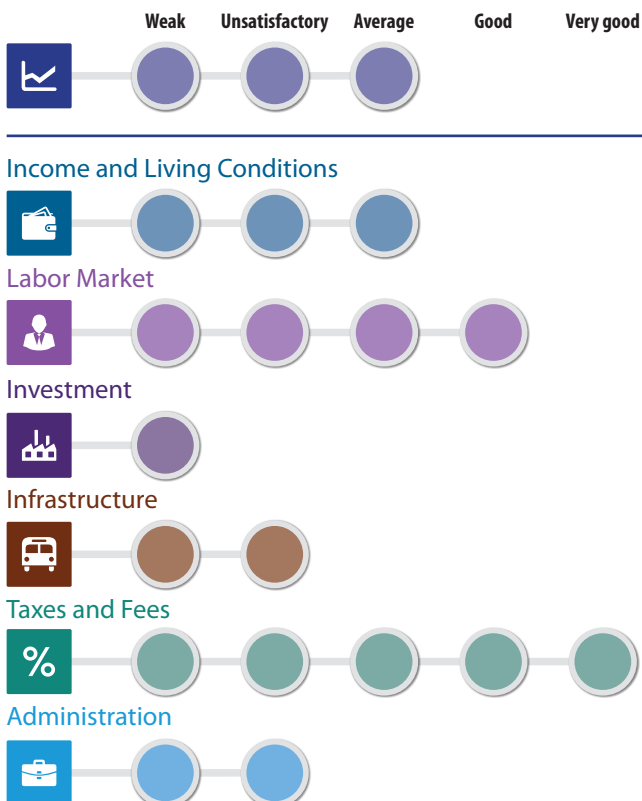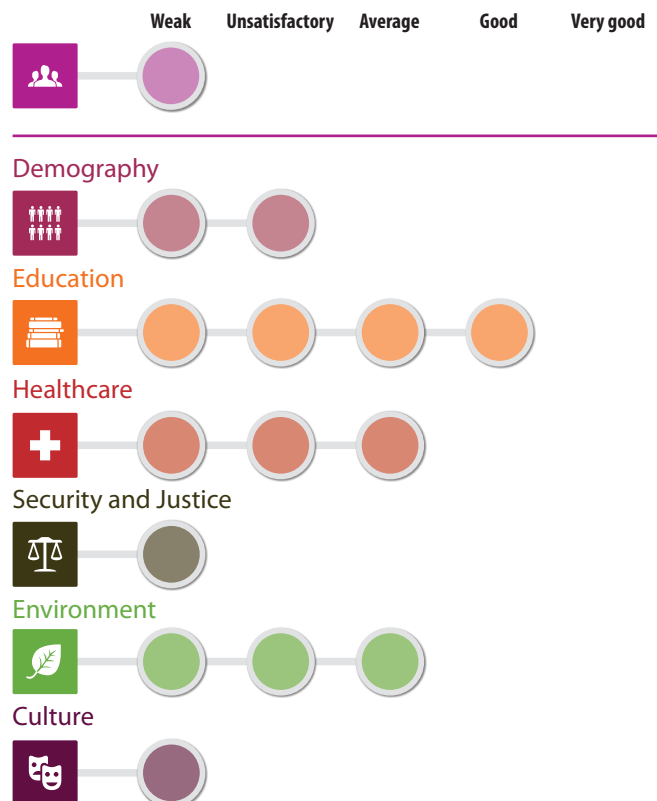
📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ● ● ●

👛 Income and Living Conditions ● ● ●

Since the crisis Kyustendil has been lagging behind the economic development in the country. Though in the last few years GDP per capita in the district kept growing, its size (7,274 BGN/person) was still far below the national value of 12,339 BGN/person in 2015. There was a considerable difference in income too: in 2015 the average annual salary in the district reached 7,486 BGN, way below the national average of 10,535 BGN while income per household member in 2016 was 4,555 BGN or lower than average by 12%.

The share of population living in material deprivation as well as those living below the poverty line increased in 2015 but remained beneath the national average.

👤 Labor Market ● ● ● ● ●

In 2016 economic activity in the district kept on growing for the third year in a row to reach 69.9% and overtake the national average of 68.7%. This tendency was accompanied by rising employment and falling unemployment: a reflection of economic recovery in the district. Employment experienced a stable growth and managed to settle at a level of 64.1% – higher than the national average of 63.4% for the first time in the last five years. Unemployment, on the other hand, shrank fast though it kept its above-average level.

The educational structure of the population aged 25–64 also improved. In 2016 the share of university graduates increased to almost 25%: still lower than the national average of 28%. The share of people with primary or lower education on its part dropped to 12%, and remained below the national average of 18%.

In 2016 the district of Kyustendil was still one of the three districts, the other two being Gabrovo and Smolyan, with the least favorable demographic replacement ratio of 48.5%. The implication was that for every 100 people about to leave the labor market in the coming few years there were 49 young people ready to join the workforce.

🏭 Investment ●

In 2015 the number of working enterprises in the district as well as FTA acquisition expenditures in it relative to the population increased considerably, though both remained far below national average levels. Foreign investment relative to the population in Kyustendil was still almost ten times lower than the national average value and that difference increased in 2015.

As of 30th June 2017 Kyustendil was once again the district with the smallest sums paid from operational programs to local beneficiaries (614 BGN/person vs. 1,344 BGN/person

on average nationally). The municipality that utilized most EU funds in the district was Rila with 6,154 BGN/person, because of the construction works on the "Struma" highway. That made it the municipality with the highest utilization of EU funds in the country.

🚌 Infrastructure ● ●

In 2015 road density in the district increased to 20.5 km/ 100 sq. km (vs. 18.6 km/100 sq. km nationally) parallel to the increased share (to 20.3% vs. 18.6% nationally) of highways and first class roads – all accounted primarily by the construction process of the Struma highway. This also entailed an increased share of road surfaces with good quality in 2015 and 2016 to reach 52.8% in 2016 when the national average rate was 41.5%.

The share of households with Internet access in the district increased in 2016 as well, though it was still below the national average level. The share of local people who used the Internet was also relatively low.

% Taxes and Fees ● ● ● ● ●

In 2017 Kyustendil was the district with the lowest taxes and fees. Their average levels in all municipalities for all rates monitored in the study were below the national average. What is more, they had not increased for the last five years in the district while the same period witnessed a stable increase in the country as a whole.

The municipalities in the district (alongside the districts of Vidin, Dobrich, and Pazardzhik) also kept the lowest rate for the tax for taxi transport: 300 BGN while the national average was 525 BGN.

💼 Administration ● ●

The performance of Kyustendil in this category has been unsatisfactory. In 2009 the district was ahead of other districts in its share of territory covered by cadastral maps. Between 2009 and 2016 coverage failed to rise, retaining its rate of 18.6% while in the rest of the country it reached 22.5%. The municipalities of Boboshevo, Kocherinovo, Nevestino, and Treklyano went on having 0% coverage.

The active transparency rating of local government in the district's municipalities rose in 2017. However, municipalities in other districts reported a much faster improvement and Kyustendil remained the district with the lowest transparency: 43% vs. 59% nationally.

The rating for the development of electronic government and one-stop shop services availability were comparable with the respective national average values.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●

🏛 Demography ● ●

Kystendil's demographic tendencies ranked it last but one in the country (before Vidin district) in this category.

In recent years, population ageing and depopulation have intensified in the district. In 2016 the age dependency ratio as the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 reached 222% while the national average rate was 147%. The natural increase rate kept dropping to reach its lowest level in the district and the third lowest in the country (−13‰ vs. −6‰ nationally in 2016). The net migration rate also dropped to reach almost −8‰.

The urban population in the district has retained a level of about 69% in recent years whereas population density has been shrinking.

📖 Education ● ● ● ●

The net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade (81%) in Kyustendil increased faster once again in 2016 than it did in the rest of the country (78%). The share of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education was also relatively low.

At the same time, matriculation exam results improved in the district but stayed worse than national average grades. The district average grade at the matriculation exam in BLL was 4.12 while the national average was 4.22; poor grades were 9% (vs. less than 8% nationally).

There is no university in the district but it is situated between two of the leading centers of higher education in the country – the capital and Blagoevgrad.

✚ Healthcare ● ● ●

Kyustendil is still one of the districts with the highest share of health-insured people due to a considerable extent to the fast ageing population and the fact that the state provides health insurance for pensioners. In 2016 that share reached 95.2% while the national average was 88.1%. Both the number of GPs and that of specialists relative to the population were similar to those in other districts. The number of beds in general hospitals as well as hospitalization numbers were similar to those in other districts for 2016.

The infant mortality rate in the district increased in 2016 to reach a level of 12.6%, almost two times higher than the national average level of 6.5%.

⚖ Security and Justice ●

The district performed poorly in this category. Traditionally, district court workloads have been above national average, which has affected the speed of justice administration. In 2016 a criminal judge in the district court saw 10.4 cases a month (vs. 9.4 on average in the country). Criminal cases closed within 3 months in the district increased to 85% but remained below the national average of 89%. Pending cases dropped to 9% (vs. 8% nationally).

Crime rates remained above average in Kyustendil. Yet, the number of crimes against the person and property dropped in 2016 while their clearance rate rose to 44% of those registered during the year – below the national average rate of 48%.

🍃 Environment ● ● ●

The share of people in the district of Kyustendil with access to sewerage systems as well as those with access to wastewater treatment plants increased in 2015, approaching national average rates. The share of people with access to sewerage reached 75.1% (vs. 75.5% nationally) and those with access to wastewater treatment plants reached 61.9% (vs. 62.3% nationally).

Generated household waste (421 kg/person) was also close to the national average level of 422 kg/person annually in 2015.

Air pollution continues to be a problem in the district. In 2015 for another successive year the registered carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere were 669 t/sq. km or twice the national average of 324 t/sq. km. Only the districts of Stara Zagora, Sofia (capital city) and Varna had higher rates.

🎭 Culture ●

In 2016 museums in the district yet again attracted a comparatively large number of people and visits increased to 889 per 1,000 people (vs. 734 per 1,000 people nationally). Interest in local cinemas rose again after a drop in 2015 but was still considerably below national average rates. In 2016 there were 217 visits per 1,000 people (vs. 778 nationally).

After a few years of increase, in 2016 theater visits in the district experienced a drop to their 2012 level, while the difference from other districts increased considerably: 112 per 1,000 people in Kyustendil vs. 322 per 1,000 people nationally.

Visits to local libraries also increased as a whole but their rates, too, remained below national average ones.

Key Indicators for the District of Kyustendil

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,178	6,130	6,234	6,683	7,274	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,534	3,508	3,593	3,966	4,587	4,555
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,219	6,444	6,880	7,091	7,486	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	28.2	16.1	8.5	14.0	17.4	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	68.5	67.6	67.6	66.9	69.2	69.9
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	58.1	57.9	57.4	57.4	60.2	64.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	14.9	14.2	14.9	14.2	13.1	8.2
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	20.7	19.4	22.5	23.7	23.7	24.8
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	39	39	40	41	44	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	592	754	1,055	1,076	1,280	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	190	247	295	337	337	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	35.2	31.7	52.4	39.9	50.3	55.4
Share of roads in good condition (%)	49.8	50.0	46.4	46.4	50.5	52.8
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−10.8	−11.5	−11.4	−11.4	−12.2	−13.0
Net migration rate (‰)	−3.2	−4.9	−7.6	−6.7	−3.2	−7.8
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.40	4.19	4.28	4.30	4.07	3.97
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	5.21	8.00	5.19	3.98	10.03	12.48
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	81.3	80.4	78.6	78.3	79.3	81.1
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	91.8	91.3	90.5	92.1	94.2	95.2
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	160.3	231.0	238.4	165.3	232.6	227.4
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	16.0	15.8	16.1	15.8	15.8	14.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	35.6	38.4	32.6	29.8	34.4	44.2
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	9.4	10.3	10.6	9.5	9.8	9.2
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	60.3	60.6	60.8	61.0	61.9	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	739.8	690.0	668.9	668.9	668.9	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	132	86	68	201	187	217
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	108	114	139	146	155	112

Lovech District

▶ Population (2016)	130,358
▶ Area (sq. km)	4,128.8
▶ Number of settlements	149
▶ Share of urban population (%)	62.6

LETNITSA
LUKOVIT
LOVECH
YABLANITSA
UGARCHIN
TETEVEN
TROYAN
APRILTSI

Overview

Though wealth has generally been on the increase in the district of Lovech in recent years, it has been a relatively slow process and GDP per capita has remained considerably below national average rates. The labor market was facing difficulties once again in 2016, alongside a deteriorating educational structure of the population. FTA investment and utilized EU funds grew to reach levels similar to national average ones but the amount of attracted foreign investment was relatively low. The tax burden was exceptionally high for a district with such a profile of economic development but the work of local administrations received ex-tremely high evaluation compared with the other districts. Lovech was among the districts with the least favorable age structure of the population. School enrolment rates were relatively high though the shares of dropouts from primary and secondary education were also large. The district was characterized by a shortage of specialist doctors. It has kept its past levels of low court workloads. Both the share of people with access to sewerage systems and connectivity to wastewater treatment plants have been considerably below national average figures. Cultural life is not very intensive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
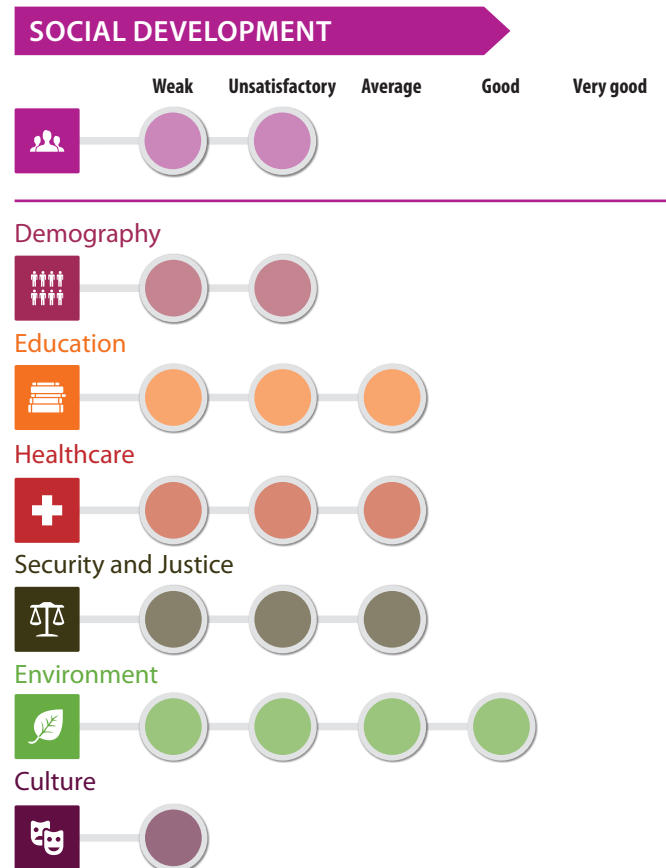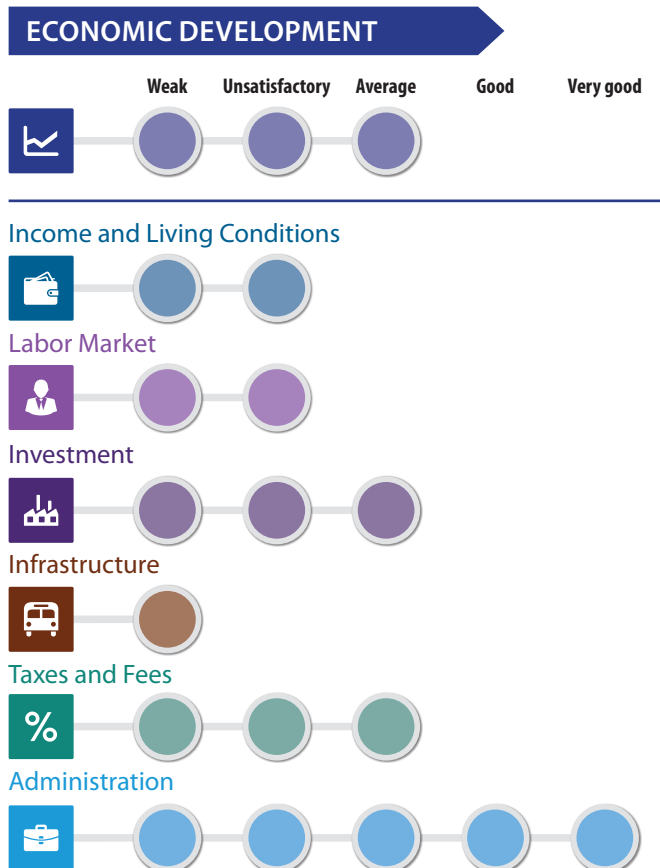
⚐ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

🛅 Income and Living Conditions ●●

The crisis had an unfavorable effect on the district's economy. Although in the post-crisis years GDP per capita started going up, in 2015 its growth slowed down to 1% (vs. a nominal 7% for the country as a whole) and that increased the distance between Lovech and national average values. Salaries and income also kept increasing but remained below national average levels. The annual average salary in the district in 2015 was slightly over 8,000 BGN while the national average salary reached over 10,500 BGN. The annual income per household member (4,123 BGN) in 2016 was lower than the national average (5,167 BGN) by almost 1,000 BGN.

All of this entailed relatively high proportions of local population living either in material deprivation or below the national poverty line. In 2015 drops were registered for both indicators.

👤 Labor Market ●●

In 2016 economic activity dropped dramatically and Lovech was ranked last but one for economic activity (56.9% vs. 68.7% nationally) in the country (higher than Montana). This drop was accompanied by falling figures in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate reached 52.4% – considerably lower than the national average rate of 63.4%.

The downward trend in both economic activity and employment in the district may be connected with the dramatically deteriorating educational structure of the population aged 25–64. After three years of growth the share of university graduates in the district dropped to 17% (vs. 28% in the country). The share of people with primary or lower education on the other hand increased to 23% (vs. 18% on average nationally).

🏭 Investment ●●●

After the crisis economic activity increased in the district though the number of operating enterprises (42 per 1,000 people) remained considerably below the national average of 55 per 1,000 people. Parallel to their increased number investment in the district increased as well. The leap in 2015 (nominally over 60%) almost entirely compensated for the previous years of lagging in the district and FTA expenditures reached 2,316 BGN/person (vs. 2,973 BGN/person nationally). Foreign investment also increased though still lagging considerably behind the national average figure: as of the end of 2015 the cumulative FDI reached 1,131 euro/person (vs. 3,250 euro nationally).

Once again Lovech was among the districts which utilized considerable EU funds – as of 30th June 2017 sums paid from operational programs to local beneficiaries reached 1,395 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN nationally). Municipalities with the highest EU fund utilization included Lukovit and Troyan, while Ugarchin and Letnitsa utilized the least.

🚌 Infrastructure ●

The railroad network density in the district is 2.6 km/100 sq. km, considerably below the national average of 3.6 km/100 sq. km. Road density, on the other hand, is similar to the national average but the share of highways and first class roads remains relatively low: 15% vs. 19% in the country. Still, road surface quality in the district remains good: in 2016 roads with good surface quality were 45%, while they were 42% in the country.

In 2016 Lovech was one of the districts where the share of households with Internet access (51% vs. 64% in the country as a whole) was smallest. Once again, in 2016 it also had the lowest share of people who had used the Internet during the previous year (53% vs. 63% in the country).

% Taxes and Fees ●●●

In 2017, once again taxes on the immovable property of legal entities and waste collection fees in the district's municipalities were relatively high, while the rest of the local taxes were below national average levels. The municipality of Yablanitsa was the only one to raise two of the monitored taxes in 2017, which did not significantly affect the general tax burden in the district.

The tax on taxi transport was also below national average rates. Despite the municipalities of Lovech and Troyan where its rate was highest (500 BGN annually), it was under 300 BGN in the remaining municipalities, thus staying below the national average rate of 525 BGN annually.

💼 Administration ●●●●●

In 2017 the rating of the administration in providing one-stop shop services increased once again to rank the district first in the country. The evaluation for the development of electronic government also improved and was close to the national average. For yet another successive year the district showed relatively transparent local administrations. In 2017 the most transparent municipalities were Troyan and Teteven, while the least transparent administration was that of Apriltsi.

In 2016 once again the district of Lovech held the second place after the capital in largest share of territory covered by cadastral maps: 81% (vs. 23% nationally). The Lukovit municipality still had 0% coverage.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●

Demography ●●

Lovech is one of the districts with the least favorable age structure of the population and that structure's deterioration has been happening at rates faster than the rest of the country. In 2016 Lovech joined the districts where the number of people aged 65+ was over twice that of people aged 0–14 with a ratio of 200.2% (vs. 147.1% nationally). Fast population ageing was facilitated by the negative rates of both the natural population growth (–12‰ vs. –6‰ nationally) and the net migration rate (–6‰). What is more, the values of both rates went down even further in 2016.

In 2016 the share of urban population (63%) remained considerably below the national average level of 73%. Lovech was also one of the districts with the lowest population density, the indicator dropping fast as the district was getting depopulated.

Education ●●●

The net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade in the district of Lovech is relatively high and contrary to the nationwide tendency of recent years it rose to 82.5% in 2016 when the national average was 78.2%. At the same time, however, the share of dropouts from primary and secondary education in the district was also above average. The number of teachers (71 per 1,000 students) was also once again lower than the national average of 75 per 1,000 students.

The district's school leavers performed relatively well at the matriculation exams in BLL in 2017 with results close to average.

Healthcare ●●●

Lovech was one of the districts with a relatively high number of health-insured people, among other reasons because of the pronounced population ageing. In 2016 their share increased once again to reach 91.3% (vs. 88.1% nationally). The district is relatively well provided with GPs (1 for each 1,420 people vs. 1,611 people nationally) but suffers from shortage of specialists (one per 621 people vs. 1 per 530 people nationally).

After shrinking for several years, in 2016 the number of beds in general hospitals increased to reach 4.2 beds per 1,000 people, though it was still below the national average rate of 5.1 beds per 1,000 people. In 2015 and 2016 there was a drop in hospitalizations in the district of Lovech: thus in 2016 they dropped to 2015 per 1,000 people while the national average rose to 235 per 1,000 people.

Security and Justice ●●●

Lovech remained among the districts with relatively low judge workloads in 2016. A criminal judge in the district court saw an average of 6.9 cases a month while the national average number was 9.1 cases a month. That affected the speedy administration of justice as well. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months in the district (93%) dropped, though it was still higher than the national average of 89%. The share of pending cases was below the national average.

In 2016 crimes against the person and property registered in the district increased and are now comparable with national average levels (12.5 per 1,000 people vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people nationally). At the same time, however, crime clearance rates in the district of Lovech rose fast to levels considerably above national average ones. In 2016, 59% of the crimes registered in the district were cleared (vs. 48% nationally).

Environment ●●●●

Due to poor urbanization the share of people in the district with access to sewerage was considerably below the national average. In 2015, after the launching of the third phase of the wastewater treatment plant in the city of Lovech, connectivity with wastewater treatment plants increased from 41.2 to 56.6%, though still remaining below the national average of 62.3%.

Lovech continued to be one of the districts with relatively clean air. In 2015 carbon dioxide emissions were over three times lower than the national average. Generated household waste per person was also relatively low.

Culture ●

Cultural life in the district is characterized by relatively low intensity.

After more than 15 years Lovech can boast a cinema again. Visits in 2016 were already over 20 000 or 150 per 1,000 people (vs. 778 per 1,000 people nationally). Theater visits were three times below the national average levels, and have continued falling. Interest in local museums was also on the decline but the rate of visits (805 per 1,000 people) remained above the national average of 734 per 1,000 people.

After a couple of years of declining interest in the district's libraries, in 2016 library visits increased once again to reach 401 per 1,000 people (vs. 605 nationally).

Key Indicators for the District of Lovech

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,096	7,128	7,360	7,666	7,759	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,825	2,963	3,134	3,788	4,084	4,123
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,184	6,509	6,940	7,487	8,033	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	33.0	32.9	36.8	31.2	29.2	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	63.3	61.1	58.5	56.9	60.2	56.9
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	55.6	52.9	52.2	51.0	54.6	52.4
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	12.2	13.4	10.7	10.2	9.2	7.9
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	21.6	16.4	15.8	18.6	20.5	17.3
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	39	39	40	41	42	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,094	1,076	1,136	1,388	2,316	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	946	959	986	996	1,131	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	30.3	33.7	34.6	45.8	50.8	51.0
Share of roads in good condition (%)	40.1	43.0	44.8	47.8	43.7	44.7
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	74.0	74.0	74.0	74.0	80.4	80.5

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−9.7	−10.2	−10.2	−11.2	−11.0	−11.9
Net migration rate (‰)	−4.1	−3.5	−5.3	−4.2	−4.2	−5.6
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.48	4.29	4.46	4.35	4.26	4.12
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	2.86	3.59	2.51	2.97	6.17	9.92
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	82.0	81.3	80.7	80.0	81.2	82.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	89.5	88.9	88.5	89.7	91.1	91.3
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	204.9	210.2	220.1	213.4	208.8	205.2
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.2	10.9	10.1	9.4	10.1	12.5
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	52.2	51.6	51.8	49.2	45.4	58.8
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	4.4	4.4	6.1	7.6	6.5	7.7
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	40.9	41.1	41.1	41.2	56.6	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	125.2	115.5	93.8	93.8	93.8	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	0	0	0	0	150
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	141	148	186	124	119	101

Montana District

- ▶ Population (2016)   135,929
- ▶ Area (sq. km)   3,635.6
- ▶ Number of settlements   131
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)   63.7

Overview

GDP, salaries and income in Montana were still considerably below average in 2016 while there were no positive tendencies on the labor market. During 2016 the district had the lowest economic activity in the country; as of the end of 2015 it held the last place in the country for attracting foreign investment relative to the population. The local municipalities' average taxes and fees were also among the lowest in the country. Montana remained one of the districts with relatively low cadastral coverage.

Population ageing in Montana was considerably faster than elsewhere in the country. In 2017 students from the district once again got low grades in the matriculation exam in BLL: a decade-long tendency. The district is short of specialist doctors. Though court workloads are relatively low, justice administration is relatively slow. Montana is still among the districts with the lowest volume of generated household waste and among those with the cleanest air. The district is characterized by relatively low intensity of cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Income and Living Conditions
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Labor Market
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Investment
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Infrastructure
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Taxes and Fees
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	●

Administration
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Demography
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Education
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Healthcare
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Security and Justice
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Environment
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Culture
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

💼 Income and Living Conditions ●●

In 2015 GDP per capita started growing in the district of Montana after the decline from the previous year. Yet, it was still lagging considerably behind the national average level: 7,270 BGN/person vs. 12,339 BGN/person nationally. Salaries, on the other hand, kept rising but failed to reach the national average. Household member incomes also rose in 2016 but failed to compensate the decline in 2015 and the relatively low base, thus remaining below the national average by almost 1,000 BGN: 4,191 and 5,167 BGN respectively.

The slowly rising incomes in Montana determined the high share of population below the national poverty line (32.8% vs. 22.9% nationally) in 2015.

👤 Labor Market ●●

Labor market tendencies have not been good in the district. Though unemployment continued shrinking in 2016 and remained below the national average rate, it was accompanied by a considerable decline of economic activity and employment for a second year in a row. Montana thus became the district with the lowest economic activity rate of 56.6%, (vs. 68.7% nationally). The implication is that a greater part of the local working age population had stopped looking for jobs. The employment rate also remained below the national average level by over 10 p.p.: 53.3% and 63.4% respectively.

Apart from the weak inflow of investment, the reason for the unfavorable picture on the labor market could be sought in the relatively poor educational structure of the population. In 2016 the rate of people with higher education in the district declined to 16.4% of those aged 25–64 (vs. 27.7% nationally) while those with primary or lower education remained above the national average level, despite getting fewer in 2016.

🏭 Investment ●

Montana became the district with the worst ratio between cumulative FDI and the local population as early as 2013. What is more, in the next two years there was an outflow of foreign investment and by the end of 2015 the cumulative figure was 201 euro/person while the national average was 3,250 euro/person.

Annual FTA expenditures almost doubled in 2015 to reach 1,772 BGN/person (vs. 2,973 BGN/person) while still lagging behind national average levels. Low investment activity was apparent in the relatively small number of working companies in the district: 4,542 or 33 per person (vs. 55 nationally).

The district was also lagging behind in utilization of EU funds from operational programs. Sums paid as of 30th June 2017 reached 1,181 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person nationally). The municipality with the largest sum of utilized funds was that of Montana (over 2,000 BGN/person) while that with the smallest sum was that of Yakimovo (under 50 BGN/person).

🚌 Infrastructure ●

Road and railroad density in Montana are below national average. The share of highways and first class roads (8.6%) was considerably below the national average rate of 18.6% in 2015, which partly accounted for the poor condition of roads in the district. In 2016, 28% of road surfaces in Montana district were in good condition (vs. 42% nationally).

Household access to the internet increased in 2016 but was still below average.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●●

The average rates of local taxes and fees in the districts' municipalities rank it among those with the lowest taxes: each of the monitored taxes and fees is far below national average levels. What is more, there was not a single raise in tax rates in the district in 2017. The Yakimovo municipality even lowered by 21% the rate of the tax for vehicles and cars from 74 to 110 kW.

The annual tax on transportation by taxi was also significantly lower than the national average rate: the municipality of Montana was the single exception with a rate of 400 BGN –all other municipalities had rates of 300 BGN, while the national average rate was 525 BGN.

💼 Administration ●●●

The administration's ratings for development of electronic government and availability of one-stop shop services in Montana district have been comparable with the average ratings in the country. Local governments' transparency evaluation was also close to the national average level after a significant improvement in transparency practices in 2017. The highest evaluation was given to the municipalities of Boichinovtsi and Lom (about 70%) while the municipality of Yakimovo was given the lowest of about 21%.

Montana remained among the districts with relatively low cadastral coverage in 2016 with 12.7% of its territory covered by cadastral maps compared to 22% on average in the country. Three of the district's municipalities had 0% coverage (Boichinovtsi, Vulchedrum and Yakimovo).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●

Demography ● ●

The district is well ahead of the rest of the country in population ageing. In 2016 once again the age dependency ratio as a ratio between the population aged 65+ and that aged 0–14 increased to reach 192% (vs. 147% nationally). In other words, old people in the district were almost twice the number of children. The reason was in pronounced negative rates of natural growth and net migration. The natural growth rate retained a level two times lower than the national average rate: –13‰ and –6‰ respectively. That was the second lowest natural increase after Vidin's. The net migration rate dropped sharply from –2.4‰ in 2015 to –5.4‰ in 2016.

Though somewhat increased, the share of urban population in the district (63.7%) remained way below the national average of 73.3%, which explains the relatively low density of the local population.

Education ● ●

In 2016 the enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade dropped below the national average level for the first time since 2009. That drop was accompanied by an increased share of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school to levels way above the national average.

In 2017 Montana students got lower than average grades at the matriculation exam in BLL, continuing a ten-year-old tendency. The district's average grade was 4.04 (vs. 4.22 nationally). However, those results were better than the previous year's. Another fact on the positive side was that fail grades shrank to 7% (vs. 8% nationally). In 2015–2016 their share was 11–12% but in 2017 they dropped to 7% vs. 8% average in the country.

Montana is still among the few districts with no universities or university branches located in it.

Healthcare ● ●

In 2016 once again the share of insured people in the district was above the national average because of the increasing number of retired people among the local population. The number of GPs was still higher relative to the population than the average in the country but there was still a shortage of specialist doctors. There were 701 local people per specialist (vs. 530 nationally).

Despite the shortage of medical specialists, the number of beds in general hospitals was maintained at a comparatively high level in the district in 2016: 6.4 beds per 1,000 people (vs. 5,1 per 1,000 people nationally). The number of hospitalizations was also above average: 277 per 1,000 people (vs. 235 per 1,000 people nationally).

Infant mortality increased in 2016 to a level almost twice the national average.

Security and Justice ● ●

Courts in Montana district still had relatively low workloads in 2016 again. A criminal judge in the district court saw an average of 6.3 cases a month (vs. 9.4 cases a month on average in the country). Despite the low workloads, however, administration of justice in the district was relatively slower. 85% of criminal cases were closed within 3 months (vs. 89% nationally) and the share of pending cases was 10% (vs. 8% nationally).

The relative number of registered crimes against the person and property in the district (12.0 per 1,000 people) remained low, though close to the national average of 12.6 per 1,000 people. The share of cleared crimes (51%) was higher, though also close to the national average of 48%.

Environment ● ● ●

The relatively low urbanization in the district comes to explain the limited access of the population to sewerage systems: 60% in Montana district vs. 76% nationally in 2015. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants at 35% was even more limited compared with the national average of 62%.

At the same time, Montana remained one of the districts with the smallest amount of generated household waste relative to the population and the cleanest air. Generated household waste was 276 kg/person annually (vs. 422 kg/person in the country). Carbon dioxide emissions – 5 t/sq. km – were dozens of times lower than the average of 324 t/sq. km in the country.

Culture ●

The district was characterized by a relatively unintensive cultural life once again in 2016. The only noticeable positive tendency was the interest in local theaters. During the last few years, theater visits rapidly increased: from 50 per 1,000 people in 2012 to 301 per 1,000 people in 2016, which was almost equal to the national average rate of 322 visits per 1,000 people. At the same time, however, interest in museums dropped for the second consecutive year to reach 206 visits per 1,000 people (vs. 734 per 1,000 people nationally).

In 2016 Montana was still among the few districts without a single cinema.

Key Indicators for the District of Montana

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,150	6,278	6,813	6,642	7,270	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,961	2,994	3,276	4,117	3,021	4,191
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,289	6,572	6,995	7,449	7,971	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	30.6	27.2	41.6	31.5	32.8	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	61.6	62.7	63.8	67.1	58.5	56.6
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	52.9	53.3	53.0	55.9	53.7	53.3
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	14.1	14.9	16.7	16.3	8.2	5.8
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	15.8	18.1	18.4	17.1	17.3	16.4
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	31	31	31	32	33	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,128	997	1,077	999	1,772	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	173	217	267	244	201	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	29.0	37.5	36.4	47.9	36.8	58.7
Share of roads in good condition (%)	25.8	22.0	29.1	31.4	31.4	28.2
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	12.3	12.3	12.3	12.3	12.3	12.7

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−12.3	−12.8	−11.7	−12.8	−13.2	−13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	−3.2	−3.4	−2.7	−3.2	−2.4	−5.4
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.38	4.10	4.17	4.19	4.04	3.88
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	3.16	9.41	6.40	6.91	10.75	12.44
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	81.9	81.1	81.7	80.5	80.6	77.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.9	87.1	86.1	87.4	89.0	88.6
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	245.1	255.3	260.4	261.5	267.7	276.6
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	14.3	14.1	13.3	11.9	13.4	12.0
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	46.3	38.4	38.7	43.2	41.5	51.2
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	10.0	12.5	10.3	11.3	14.5	10.0
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	33.9	34.0	34.2	34.3	35.1	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	5.4	5.8	6.5	7.9	5.0	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	66	50	67	81	118	301

Pazardzhik District

▶ Population (2016)	262,222
▶ Area (sq. km)	4,456.9
▶ Number of settlements	117
▶ Share of urban population (%)	62.5

Overview

In 2015 the GDP increase in the district was twice the country average; yet, welfare in Pazardzhik was considerably below national average levels. The labor market indicators were comparable to the national average rates but the population's relatively unfavorable educational structure was retained. Investment activity kept lagging in the district of Pazardzhik. Despite the relatively low share of highways and first class roads, road quality remained high.

Population ageing and depopulation are less clearly expressed in Pazardzhik district than they are in the country as a whole. Education indicators place the district among those with the poorest results both in quality and in the ability to keep children in schools. The relatively numerous hospital beds and doctors in the district determine the great number of hospitalizations. Administration of justice is relatively speedy while registered crime rates are low. Cultural life remains unintensive except for the high interest in museums.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture

📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ● ●

💼 Income and Living Conditions ●

In 2015 GDP per capita registered an increase which interrupted the downward trend from the previous two years. The increase was even over twice the country average; yet Pazardzhik remained considerably below the national average figures with 7,929 BGN/person while the national average rate was 12,339 BGN/person.

The average salary in the district kept rising in 2015 to reach over 8,000 BGN a year but it, too, remained below the national average salary of 10,500 BGN. In 2016, the annual average income per household member increased for a second consecutive year to a value over 4,000 BGN but it was already above 5,000 BGN in the country.

The district's inability to catch up with incomes and salaries determined the relatively high number of the poor and those living in material deprivation, though the values of both indicators dropped in 2015.

👤 Labor Market ● ● ●

In 2016 economic activity in Pazardzhik kept its 2015 level, whereas it shrank in the country as a whole. Yet, it remained below the national level of 68.7% with its 65.3%. Employment also remained low in the district: 60.2% (vs. 63.4% nationally), still unable to reach its pre-crisis level of 63.1% from 2008.

However, unemployment in the district kept decreasing and in 2016 it was below or similar to the national average value of 7.7%.

The population's educational structure was still relatively unfavorable between ages 25 and 64 though in 2016 there was some improvement. The share of people with higher education in the district rose by two p.p. to reach 18.8% (vs. 27.7% nationally) while the share of people with primary or lower education shrank by 1 p.p. to 25.7% (vs. 17.7% nationally).

🏭 Investment ● ●

Investment activity in the district kept lagging in 2015. Though foreign investment went up to reach 1,855 euro in 2015, it remained considerably below the national cumulative average of 3,250 euro/person. Utilized EU funds from operational programs in the district – 782 BGN/person – were almost two times lower than the national average level of 1,344 BGN/person as of 30th June 2017. The greatest sums were paid to beneficiaries from the municipality of Panagyurishte and the smallest to those from Sarnitsa and Rakitovo.

Entrepreneurial initiative in the district intensified in 2015. The number of enterprises reached 42 per 1,000 people

(vs. 55 per 1,000 people nationally). FTA acquisition expenditures also increased, though at a relatively slow pace, having in mind the low base and the lag from the national average levels. They went up to 1,659 BGN in 2015 (vs. 2,973 BGN nationally).

🚆 Infrastructure ● ● ●

Road and railroad density in the district of Pazardzhik are comparable to the national average. The share of highways and first class roads, 15%, was lower than the national average of 19% in 2015 though the road surface quality remained relatively high. In 2016, 47% of the road surface was in good quality (vs. 42% nationally).

Internet access and usage by the local population rose in 2016 but remained below national average levels.

% Taxes and Fees ● ● ●

Local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities remained unchanged in 2017. While the average rates of the property transfer tax and the waste collection fee were relatively high, the immovable property tax, vehicle tax and license tax for retail trade were lower than the respective average rates in the country.

The tax on taxi transport was one of the lowest in the country. All municipalities in the district, which collected this kind of tax, had a rate of 300 BGN in 2017 when the national average was 525 BGN.

💼 Administration ● ●

In 2017 the administration's evaluation for the development of electronic government and the accessibility of one-stop shop services of the district's municipalities fell and remained below national average values.

The transparency rating of the district's municipalities, on the other hand, rose to approach the national average. The most transparent municipality in the district is Panagyurishte with a rating of 70%, whereas the least transparent ones are Sarnitsa, Belovo, and Lesichovo (all below 40%).

Cadastral coverage was once again on the increase in 2016 (27%) reaching above the national average mark of 23%. The reason was the increased coverage in the Pazardzhik municipality. Coverage in the municipalities of Velingrad, Lesichovo, Septemvri, and Strelcha remained 0%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Though Pazardzhik was following the overall national trend of population ageing and depopulation these processes were somewhat less conspicuous in the district. The district's age dependency ratio as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 was 134% in 2016 (vs. 147% nationally). The natural increase rate remained negative in 2015 and 2016, approaching the average national value of about –6‰. Between 2014 and 2016 the net migration rate retained its level of –4.9‰, which indicates that a greater part of people left the district than those settling in it.

Urban population retained a share of 63%, considerably lower than the 73% average for the country. Still, because of the great number of small settlements with significant population, the density in the district was high – 2,159 people/sq. km (vs. 1,548 people/sq. km in the country as a whole).

Education

In this category, indicators place Pazardzhik among the districts with the poorest education. The enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade shrank again in 2016 to a level below the national average. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were considerably higher, the share of dropouts rising quickly in the last few years to a level close to the highest in the country: almost 5% in 2015.

Average grades at the matriculation exams in BLL dropped in 2017 compared with the previous year, thus increasing the difference from the national average grade. Poor grades also increased in 2017 to a number almost twice the national average: over 15% vs. below 8% nationally. Only the districts of Kardzhali and Yambol – with more than 20% each – had higher shares of fail grades.

The district is one of the few without any universities or their branches located in them.

Healthcare

The share of health-insured people in the district – 85.2% – was below the national average of 88.1% in 2016. Access to doctors remained close to average. In 2016, there were 1,610 people per GP (vs. 1,611 on average in the country) and 577 people per specialist (vs. 530 nationally).

The number of beds in local hospitals remained above the national average and its increase overtook the national rate in 2016. Hospital beds in the district reached 6.6 per 1,000 people (vs. 5.1 per 1,000 people nationally).

The relatively large number of hospital beds and the relatively high number of doctors in the district determined the high number of hospitalizations: 276 per 1,000 people in 2016 (vs. 135 per 1,000 people nationally).

Security and Justice

Though this was the second year in a row when courts' workloads increased in Pazardzhik to reach above national average levels, administration of justice was relatively speedy. In 2016 a criminal judge saw an average of 12 cases a month (vs. 9 cases a month on average for the country). The share of criminal cases in the district to be closed within 3 months remained at 93% for the third year in a row (vs. 89% in the country) in 2016. At the same time, the share of pending cases shrank once again to reach 5% (vs. 8% for the country).

Registered crime rates have traditionally been low in the district. In 2016 registered crimes against the person and property dropped for the third year in a row to reach 9.9 per 1,000 people (vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people in the country). The crime clearance rate rose to 55% (vs. 48% nationally).

Environment

The relatively poor urbanization in the district has been the reason for the poor availability of sewerage systems. The newly built wastewater treatment plant in the town of Septemvri was launched in 2015 and the share of people with access to sewerage connected to wastewater treatment increased from 27 to 44%, but was still considerably below the national average level of 62% in 2015.

Pazardzhik remained one of the districts with relatively clean air. Carbon dioxide emissions per sq. km of its territory were ten times lower compared to the country's average levels. Generated waste in the district was comparable with the national average.

Culture

Pazardzhik is one of the districts with a relatively low intensity of cultural life. Nevertheless, interest in local museums increased for the second year in a row to overtake national average levels for the first time since 2012, registering 783 visits per 1,000 people (vs. 734 nationally) in 2016. The number of visits to local theaters also went up in 2016 to reach 237 per 1,000 people (vs. 322 nationally).

The rate of library visits, however, experienced a sharp decline in 2016 to a level five times lower than the national average.

Key Indicators for the District of Pazardzhik

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,169	7,567	7,281	6,864	7,929	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,972	3,460	3,755	3,570	3,728	4,229
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,368	6,862	7,264	7,650	8,006	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	38.8	45.5	50.2	46.6	43.3	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.1	64.2	64.5	66.6	65.3	65.3
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	54.0	52.4	56.0	59.6	59.7	60.2
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	18.1	18.3	13.0	10.4	8.6	7.7
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	16.9	16.8	16.6	15.3	16.8	18.8
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	38	39	39	39	42	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,236	1,265	1,227	1,512	1,659	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,446	1,581	1,702	1,762	1,855	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	38.7	40.4	36.1	49.6	50.6	60.7
Share of roads in good condition (%)	43.0	44.0	52.6	49.8	51.8	47.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	19.4	25.1	25.1	26.8	26.8	27.1

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−4.6	−4.5	−4.2	−5.3	−6.1	−5.8
Net migration rate (‰)	−2.5	−3.2	−4.7	−4.9	−4.9	−4.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.35	4.10	4.13	4.24	4.21	4.01
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	4.55	6.78	6.88	5.82	6.57	14.56
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	83.1	82.5	78.1	78.9	78.7	77.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	84.4	83.4	82.6	83.6	85.5	85.2
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	135.4	265.0	279.3	152.6	265.8	276.1
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.9	9.7	10.5	10.2	10.1	9.9
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	41.6	38.2	39.3	41.8	46.0	55.4
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	2.2	7.9	6.9	9.8	6.9	5.1
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	26.1	27.2	27.3	27.4	44.3	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	71.6	48.7	37.9	35.5	32.5	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	98	86	123	163	154	237

Pernik District

▶ Population (2016)	124,613
▶ Area (sq. km)	2,394.2
▶ Number of settlements	172
▶ Share of urban population (%)	78.6

TRAN
BREZNIK
PERNIK
Kovachevtsi
ZEMEN
RADOMIR

Overview

The GDP per capita in the district is still two times lower than the national average. Nevertheless, incomes have stayed higher mainly due to the daily labor migration of the population to the capital. An exceptionally high percentage of people in the district have secondary education. Pernik remains among the districts with relatively poor investment activity. Average local tax and fee rates in the district's municipalities have been largely more favorable than the national average ones. Evaluations of the local administration are relatively low; the rate of cadastral map coverage is one of the most limited in the country. Population ageing in the district has mostly been a consequence of the low natural growth rate but also of the negative net migration rate. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education have remained considerably below national average rates. The local population mostly seeks for medical service outside the district because of the district's proximity to the capital. Crime rates have stayed high while crime clearance rates have remained below average. Cultural life is not particularly intensive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
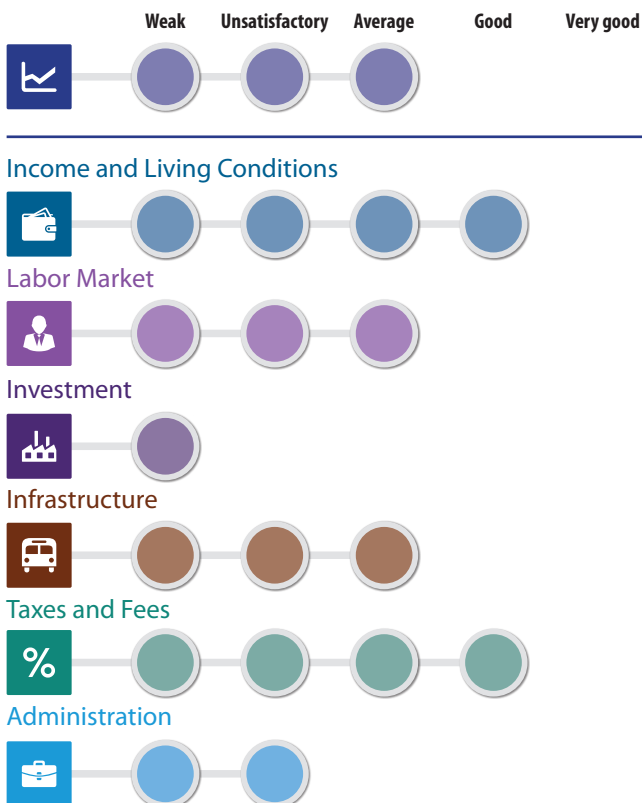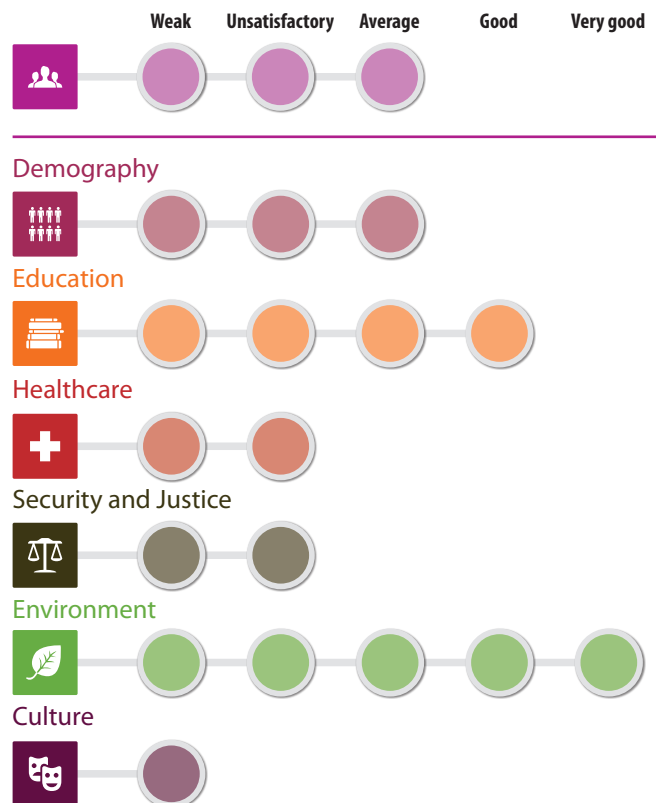
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

GDP per capita in Pernik district was on the rise once again in 2015, albeit at a rate considerably slower than that in the country as a whole. Thus, it retained a value of 6,021 BGN – two times lower than the national average of 12,339 BGN. The pre-crisis level of GDP per capita in Pernik had reached almost 8,000 BGN which demonstrates the depth of the crisis and the district's slow recovery from it.

The average annual gross salary in the district also kept going up to reach 7,514 BGN in 2015 when the national average was 10,535 BGN annually. Income per household member dropped for the first time in over 10 years but the drop was small (2%) and its level stayed above national average. What explains the relatively high incomes, accompanied by a low GDP in the district, is the population's daily work migration to the capital.

The relatively high incomes in the district also determine the relatively low share of local population living in material deprivation as well as that of the population living below the national poverty line, though both indicators were close to national average values in 2015.

Labor Market ●●●

In line with the general tendency in the country, economic activity in the district of Pernik dropped in 2016 after a few years of growth. Yet, it remained above the national average values. The relatively high economic activity, however, found an expression in employment levels below average and higher unemployment levels. Thus, while the employment rate in the district was close to the average one once again in 2016, the unemployment rate of 12.4% was considerably higher than the national average of 7.7%.

The local population's educational structure between ages 25 and 64 comprised an exceptionally high share of people with secondary education (71% vs. 55% for the country) in 2016. The respective shares of people with tertiary education and people with primary or lower education were below national average levels.

Investment ●

Pernik remained one of the districts with relatively low investment activity. The number of enterprises rose slightly in 2015 but relative to the population it was still far below the national average. FTA acquisition expenditures registered a considerable rise but they, too, remained considerably below national average. At the same time, though, there was a serious outflow of investment from the district unlike most other districts. What is more, the decline in foreign investment in Pernik continued a downward trend noticeable for several years already and towards the end of 2015 its cumulative value reached 1,436 euro/person (vs. 3,250 euro/person nationally).

The district's performance in the utilization of EU funds has also been relatively poor. As of 30th June 2017 sums paid from operational programs rose to 826 BGN/person (vs. 1,334 BGN/person nationally). The district's municipalities with most utilized funds were Zemen and Trun, while that with least funds was Kovachevtsi.

Infrastructure ●●●

The density of the road and railroad networks in the district is relatively high. Yet, the share of highways and first class roads is below average for the country.

In 2016 road quality in the district declined for the second year in a row, while it was improving in the country, but the share of road surfaces in good condition was relatively high: 47% (vs. 42% nationally).

The share of households with Internet access and that of local people using the Internet in 2016 were close to, though lower than, national average levels.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●

The average rates of local taxes and fees in Pernik municipalities were relatively more favorable than the national average rates in 2017 once again. The district average vehicle tax was the only one slightly higher than the national average rate, albeit with a minimal difference. What is more, there were no cases of raised local taxes and fees in the district compared with 2016.

The rate of the annual tax on taxi transport in the district's municipalities was at the national minimum of 300 BGN with the exception of the Radomir municipality where the rate was 400 BGN.

Administration ●●

The administration's evaluations for electronic government and the provided one-stop shop administrative services in the district's municipalities lagged behind national average figures in 2017 though the differences were insignificant.

The transparency rating of local government was considerably lower, although in 2017 it rose to 47% (vs. 59% nationally). The most transparent municipality in the district was once again that of Breznik with 64% and the least transparent ones were those of Trun and Zemen with 22% each.

Cadastral map coverage of the district's territory also stayed at an exceptionally low level: 4.5% – the second lowest after the district of Kardzhali. The municipalities of Zemen, Kovachevtsi and Trun have not been included in the cadastral map yet.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●●

In 2016 for the third year in a row, Pernik was one of five districts (alongside Vidin, Gabrovo, Kyustendil, and Lovech) where there were over two persons aged 65+ for each person aged 0–14.

Population ageing is a consequence of both the exceptionally low natural increase rate and the negative net migration rate. In 2016, though there was a noticeable increase, the natural increase rate in the district was almost two times lower than the national average rate. The net migration rate was relatively favorable compared with the rate in most districts of almost –2‰, the most probable explanation being that the closeness to Sofia and the possibilities for daily labor migration to the capital have been keeping it at these levels.

Though a relatively high share of the local population lives in towns, the density of the district's population is almost two times lower than the national average.

Education ●●●●

In 2016, for the second year in a row, the share of children enrolled in 5th–8th grade in Pernik district was higher than the national average, the distance increasing because of the rise in Pernik district (up to 80%) and the drop in the country as a whole (to 78.2%).

The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education in the district remained considerably below national average rates. On the other hand, however, school leavers' performance in the district was comparable to the national average level. At the matriculation exams in BLL in 2017 the average grade of Pernik district was 4.17 vs. the national average of 4.22 whereas the share of poor grades rose to over 9% (vs. under 8% nationally).

In the 2016/2017 academic year there were 40 enrolled university students in Pernik, which was the lowest number since the district had had a university, and the lowest among the districts offering higher education.

Healthcare ●●

The share of health-insured people in Pernik was once again higher than the national average rate in 2016. The number of GPs remained higher as well.

At the same time, 2016 data indicate once again that the local population got specialized medical help outside the district – mostly because the capital, with the greatest number of medical specialists relative to the population, is so close. Pernik district, on its part, has the smallest number of medical specialists. For the fifth year in a row it was also the district with the smallest number of hospital beds (2.4 beds per 1,000 people vs. 5.1 per 1,000 people nationally) as well

as the district with the smallest number of hospitalizations – 106 per 1,000 people, vs. 235 per 1,000 people nationally.

Security and Justice ●●

Criminal judges in the district court in Pernik had relatively low workloads in 2016. One judge saw an average of 7.0 cases a month while the national average rate reached 9.4 cases a month. That explains the relatively fast administration of justice in the district. In 2016, 91% of cases were closed within 3 months (vs. 89% nationally) while the share of pending cases dropped to a rate under 6% (vs. over 8% nationally).

Though the crimes against the person and property registered in the district (14.2 per 1,000 people) dropped in 2016, they were above the national average rate of 12.6 per 1,000 people for the fifth consecutive year. Meanwhile, the crime clearance rate remained below average. From all the crimes registered in 2016 43% were cleared (vs. 48% nationally).

Environment ●●●●●

The relatively high urbanization rate in Pernik district was a prerequisite for the higher share of population with access to public sewerage in 2015: 79% compared to 76% nationally. Connectivity with wastewater treatment plants was also high.

The amount of generated household waste (352 kg/person annually) dropped for the third successive year in 2015 to a level below the average of 422 kg/person annually for the first time. Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (261 t/sq. km) also dropped and remained below the average of 324 t/sq. km in the country.

Culture ●

The intensity of cultural life in Pernik district was considerably below the national average level. Both the maintenance of cultural sites/events and visits to them were probably affected by the capital's proximity.

All indicators in this category were below national average levels in 2016 once again. The largest increase was in the annual average number of visits to local theaters: from 83 per 1,000 people in 2015 to 152 per 1,000 people in 2016 but even the latter value was almost two times lower than the national average. Interest in the district's libraries also experienced a revival and went up dramatically to reach 589 per 1,000 people or close to the national average of 605 per 1,000 people. There was an increase, though a minor one, in museum visits as well.

In 2016, Pernik was still one of the four districts without a single cinema in 2016.

Key Indicators for the District of Pernik

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,664	5,990	5,778	5,936	6,021	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,473	5,021	5,764	5,941	6,093	5,941
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,080	6,392	6,719	7,063	7,514	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	9.5	11.6	11.9	19.1	20.3	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.4	68.6	69.6	71.0	72.7	70.7
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	61.1	61.7	60.4	61.6	62.5	61.9
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	8.0	9.9	13.0	13.1	14.0	12.4
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	16.7	16.6	16.9	17.8	22.5	18.6
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	37	38	39	40	41	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	707	853	983	992	1,333	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,945	1,865	1,774	1,713	1,436	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	35.0	42.3	48.4	52.8	53.0	57.2
Share of roads in good condition (%)	41.7	52.0	48.9	49.5	49.2	47.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−11.3	−11.7	−11.1	−11.2	−12.5	−11.6
Net migration rate (‰)	−1.6	−1.7	−0.8	−1.7	−0.1	−1.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.39	4.12	4.16	4.25	4.12	4.06
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	4.05	4.47	5.28	5.57	8.07	8.27
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	80.2	77.8	77.0	76.7	78.9	80.3
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.8	88.3	87.5	88.6	90.0	89.8
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	100.6	103.6	103.4	99.3	97.6	106.1
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	14.3	14.9	15.2	14.0	15.4	14.2
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	38.2	33.1	34.6	30.6	31.1	42.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.5	7.8	10.1	10.0	6.5	5.9
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	74.0	74.1	74.2	74.1	73.9	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	297.8	257.0	250.9	292.8	261.3	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	88	84	69	55	83	152

Pleven District

▸ Population (2016)	250,062
▸ Area (sq. km)	4,653.3
▸ Number of settlements	123
▸ Share of urban population (%)	66.5

Map showing municipalities: GULYANTSI, NIKOPOL, BELENE, KNEZHA, ISKAR, DOLNA MITROPOLIYA, CHERVEN BRYAG, DOLNI DABNIK, PLEVEN, PORDIM, LEVSKI

Overview

Both GDP per capita and salaries grew at a slower pace in the district of Pleven than they did in the country as a whole, and the district is lagging further behind. In 2016 the decline in employment and the rise in unemployment were in contrast to the positive general trends in the country. Investment activity in the district was relatively low. Access to the Internet and its usage by the local population remained considerably lower than the respective national levels. The evaluations of the administration for the development of electronic government and the availability of one-stop shop services in Pleven's municipalities were comparable with the national average levels.

The district of Pleven was among those districts with the lowest natural increase in 2016. The net migration rate dropped as well and reached its lowest level in the last ten years. Matriculation exam results in the district were relatively poor. Pleven is one of the districts with the best ratings for the state of healthcare. Judges' workloads are relatively low and the administration of justice is relatively fast. Though interest in museums is traditionally high, cultural life in the district lacks intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Income and Living Conditions

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Labor Market

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Investment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Infrastructure

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Taxes and Fees

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Administration

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Demography

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Education

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Healthcare

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	●

Security and Justice

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Environment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Culture

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

GDP per capita kept growing in 2015 but the rate of its growth in the district was below the national average: it reached 7,039 BGN while the national average was 12,339 BGN. Salaries presented a similar picture. While the size of the gross average annual salary in the district was over 80% of the national average before the crisis, in 2015, it was below 75%: 7,892 BGN in the district vs. the national average of 10,535 BGN.

However, the average annual income per household member remained relatively high in 2015. That was the reason why the district of Pleven was close to the national average levels in share of population living in material deprivation (27% vs. 32% nationally) and of population living below the national poverty line (24% vs. 23% nationally).

Labor Market ●●●

In 2016, economic activity in the district went down in tune with the national tendencies reaching 66.5% (vs. 68.7% nationally). But while in the country as a whole this process was accompanied by rising employment and decline in unemployment, precisely the opposite happened in the district of Pleven. Employment dropped to its pre-crisis level, which it had managed to surpass in 2015 and reached 59.5% when the national average level was 63.4%. Pleven was also one of the few districts in which unemployment was on the rise in 2016. While unemployment in the country dropped by 1.4 p.p., in Pleven it grew by 1.4 p.p. to reach 10.6%.

The educational structure of the population aged 25–64 was another indicator which deteriorated. The share of people with tertiary education registered a slight drop to 24.1% while that of people with primary or lower education grew to 19.3%. Yet, differences from the respective national average figures were relatively small.

Investment ●●

Investment activity was relatively low in the district in 2015. The number of enterprises increased to 39 per 1,000 people but remained below the national average of 55 per 1,000 people. FTA acquisition expenses also grew that year to reach almost 2,000 BGN/person when the national average was about 3,000 BGN/person.

Attracted foreign investment in the district was relatively low. In 2015 there was even a small drop and its size as of the end of that year reached 1,230 euro/person while the national average was 3,250 euro/person.

The district of Pleven utilized relatively small amounts of EU funds. As of 30th June 2017 the sums paid from operational programs to beneficiaries in the district of Pleven amounted to 228 m BGN or 914 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person

nationally). The municipality with most utilized funds was once again that of Belene with almost 4,000 BGN/person while none of the remaining ten municipalities in the district went over the 1,000 BGN/person mark.

Infrastructure ●

The density of the road and railroad networks in the district was comparable with the national average figures but the share of highways and first class roads was lower: 12% in 2015 when the national average rate was 19%. The quality of roads in Pleven was similar to that in the country as a whole: in 2016, 41% of road surfaces were in good state (vs. 42% nationally).

Access to and usage of the Internet remained considerably below national average rates in 2016: both the share of households with Internet access and that of people who had used the Internet the previous year shrank to 50% (vs. 64% and 63% on average in the country respectively).

Taxes and Fees ●●

The tax on immovable property of legal entities in the district was considerably above average; it even rose further because of raised rates in the municipalities of Belene and Nikopol. The property transfer tax was also above average: its rates in most of the district's municipalities were higher than national average rates.

The average rate of the annual license tax for retailers, on the other hand, was considerably below the national average and remained unchanged in 2017. Even its highest rate, that of the city municipality of Pleven, was lower than the national average. The vehicle tax remained lower, too; as it was lowered further in the municipality of Dolna Mitropoliya the difference increased. The taxi transport tax in the district's municipalities was also lower than the national average.

Administration ●●●

In 2017 the municipal administrations' self-evaluations on the development of electronic government and the availability of one-stop shop services in the district's municipalities were comparable to national average levels. Administration transparency in the district increased in 2017 and remained above average but the difference was dwindling. The municipalities of Dolna Mitropoliya and the city of Pleven were evaluated as the most transparent, while the least transparent municipality was once again that of Levski.

The district's cadastral coverage grew in 2016 though it remained below average. There were still four municipalities in the district without any cadastral coverage at all.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ●

Demography ● ●

Since 2011 the natural increase rate in the district has retained the same level of about –10‰, which is considerably below the national average level. Once again the district of Pleven had one of the lowest natural growth rates in 2016. The net migration rate also declined in 2016 to reach its lowest level in ten years.

These processes predetermined the fast population ageing in the district. In 2016 the ratio of age dependency as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 was 186% while the national average rate was 147%.

Pleven is one of the relatively poorly urbanized districts: 67% of the local population lives in towns compared to 73% nationally, which is reflected in the lower population density in the district as well.

Education ● ●

The net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade in Pleven has been above average in the last 5–6 years. In 2016 it reached 83% in the district while the national average was 78%. Despite the wider enrolment in educational structures in the district the shares of repeaters and those of dropouts from primary and secondary education were considerably above national average shares.

Matriculation exam results also remained lower. The students from Pleven got some of the poorest grades at the matriculation BLL exam in 2017: their average grade was 3.98 (vs. 4.22 nationally). The share of fail grades was also relatively high: almost 14% of people who sat the exam in the district got poor grades (vs. 8% nationally).

In 2016 the number of university students in the district was above 2,000 for the second year in a row which was a district record but compared to other districts in the country offering tertiary education, that was a relatively low number.

Healthcare ● ● ● ● ●

Pleven was one of the districts with the best ratings for healthcare in the country based on the monitored indicators in 2016. 98% of the population had health insurance (vs. 88% nationally). The availability of doctors was high as well. Pleven ranked first in the country for its relative number of GPs: 1 for 1,216 people (vs. 1 for 1,611 people in the country as a whole). The district ranked second (after the capital) in availability of medical specialists: one for 399 people (vs. one for 590 people on average nationally).

Traditionally Pleven has had the largest number of beds in general hospitals relative to the population. In 2016 there were 7.4 beds per 1,000 people (vs. 5.1 per 1,000 people na-

tionally): a prerequisite for a secure second place of Pleven (after Plovdiv) for the greatest number of hospitalizations: 325 per 1,000 people (vs. 235 per 1,000 people nationally).

Security and Justice ● ● ●

The administration of justice in the district was characterized by low workloads for judges and relatively speedy closing of cases. Criminal judges in the district court saw an average of 7.6 cases a month (vs. 9.4 cases a month per judge nationally) in 2016. The share of cases to be closed in three months remained 95% (vs. 89% nationally) while the share of pending cases remained below the national average.

Though the crimes against the person and property registered in the district declined in 2016, at the rate of 14.5 per 1,000 people, they were above the national average rate of 12.6 per 1,000 people. At the same time, the district's crime clearance rate (48.5% cleared crimes) was above, though slightly, the national average rate of 48.2%.

Environment ● ● ●

The district population's low connectivity to sewerage has been a consequence of the relatively low urbanization. In 2015, 57% of the local people lived in areas with public sewerage (vs. 76% nationally) while 50% had access to sewerage systems connected with wastewater treatment plants (vs. 62% nationally).

The air in the district of Pleven was relatively clean in 2015. Carbon dioxide emissions were seven times lower than national average levels. Pleven was also one of the districts with the smallest amount of generated household waste relative to the population.

Culture ●

Interest in museums has traditionally been higher in the district than the national average figure. In 2016, 891 visits per 1,000 people were registered in it while the national average rate was 734 per 1,000 people.

The remaining indicators in this category showed a relatively low intensity of cultural life in Pleven. Visits to the local theaters were more than two times fewer than the national average: 142 per 1,000 people vs. 322 per 1,000 people nationally; library visits were four times fewer (141 per 1,000 people vs. 605 per 1,000 people nationally). Cinema visits registered a considerable number (507 per 1,000 people), but they, too, were below the national average rate of 778 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Pleven

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,392	6,369	6,676	6,734	7,039	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,902	5,091	5,431	5,043	5,645	5,666
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,308	6,646	7,046	7,400	7,892	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	21.4	19.6	10.0	22.9	23.6	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	61.6	61.9	66.1	63.7	67.5	66.5
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	54.1	55.5	58.1	58.0	61.2	59.5
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	12.0	10.3	12.1	9.0	9.2	10.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	18.5	21.7	22.9	23.6	24.5	24.1
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	35	35	36	37	39	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,079	1,833	1,618	1,473	1,992	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	652	736	1,191	1,191	1,130	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	35.8	37.3	47.6	43.8	54.5	50.3
Share of roads in good condition (%)	29.2	31.0	38.8	39.0	39.0	40.5
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.8	12.5

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−9.6	−10.1	−9.1	−10.0	−10.0	−9.8
Net migration rate (‰)	−2.5	−4.4	−4.7	−4.0	−4.9	−5.7
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.33	4.06	4.13	4.10	4.01	3.96
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	4.66	8.03	8.73	7.93	10.20	14.72
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	83.5	82.7	83.5	82.9	80.4	82.9
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	89.4	88.8	88.2	89.5	90.8	90.8
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	207.1	277.8	308.7	235.9	323.2	325.2
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	16.5	15.9	16.7	15.7	16.0	14.5
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	42.1	38.5	36.7	39.2	36.3	48.5
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	7.3	6.2	5.3	11.0	8.1	5.8
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	41.0	41.0	41.2	41.3	49.8	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	62.3	50.6	52.8	56.7	44.2	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	192	185	214	388	511	507
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	108	126	141	138	172	142

Plovdiv District

▶ Population (2016)	672,428
▶ Area (sq. km)	5,972.9
▶ Number of settlements	224
▶ Share of urban population (%)	75.2

Map labels: SOPOT, KARLOVO, HISARYA, Kaloyanovo, BREZOVO, SAEDINENIE, RAKOVSKI, MARITSA, PLOVDIV, SADOVO, STAMBOLIYSKI, PERUSHTITSA, PARVOMAY, KRICHIM, KUKLEN, ASENOVGRAD, RODOPI, LAKI

Overview

After several years of hesitant growth, GDP per capita in the district overtook the national average growth rate. The annual average salary also increased considerably. Unemployment began to decline though this was mainly due to the population's lower economic activity. Investment activity in the district of Plovdiv is close to national average figures. The average rates of local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities are above the national average level. The demographic picture has been considerably more favorable in the district than in the country as a whole because Plovdiv is one of the few districts that attract net migrants from other districts. Plovdiv has continued its traditional good performance at matriculation exams. Both the number of doctors and the hospital capacity in the district have remained above national levels. Though the judges in it have some of the highest workloads in the country, administration of justice has been relatively speedy. The relatively high urbanization rate and population density in Plovdiv come to explain the high access of the population to sewerage and wastewater treatment plants. In 2016 cinemas registered the highest growth rate and the greatest number of visits.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
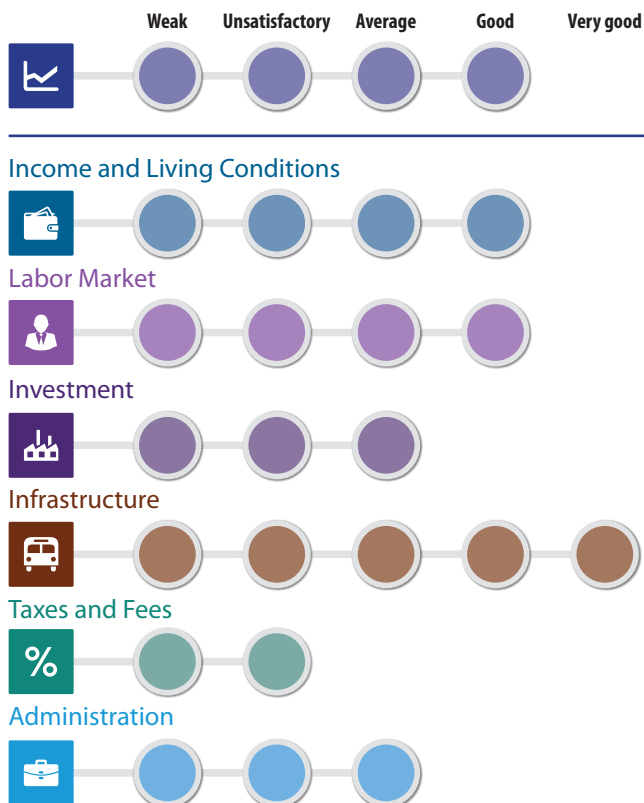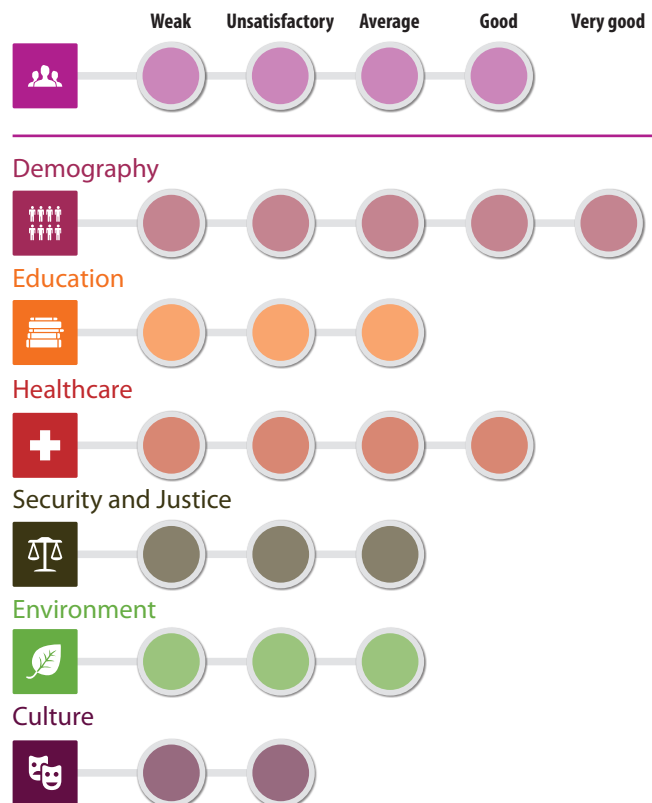
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
(overall)				●	

Income and Living Conditions

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
			●	

Labor Market

| | | ● | | |

Investment

| | ● | | | |

Infrastructure

| | | | ● | |

Taxes and Fees

| ● | | | | |

Administration

| | ● | | | |

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
(overall)				●	

Demography

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
				●

Education

| | | ● | | |

Healthcare

| | | ● | | |

Security and Justice

| | | ● | | |

Environment

| | | ● | | |

Culture

| ● | | | | |

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

💰 Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

After several years of hesitant growth, GDP per capita registered a stable growth in 2015 and even overtook the country's average rate. The district ranked seventh with 10,173 BGN/person while the national average was 12,339 BGN/person. There were some fluctuations in household incomes but the annual average salary rose constantly and significantly. In 2015 it reached 9,084 BGN while the national average was 10,535 BGN and has generally been catching up each successive year.

The share of local population living in material deprivation and that of people living below the national poverty line in 2015 were comparable to the respective national rates.

👤 Labor Market ●●●●

In 2016 economic activity in Plovdiv declined to 66.5%, following the national trend. However, this was the second successive year when it stayed below the national average of 68.7%. Employment remained stable at about 62.0% (vs. 63.4% nationally) in the last 3 years. The declining activity led to lower unemployment: from 13.4% in 2013 it shrank rapidly to reach its 2016 rate of 6.8%, lower for the first time than the national average of 7.7%.

 The educational structure of people between ages 25 and 64 in the district of Plovdiv remained almost unchanged and a little less favorable than the national average. In 2016 people with university degrees were 25.2% (vs. 27.7% nationally) while those with primary and lower education were 19.7% (vs. 17.7% nationally).

🏭 Investment ●●●

Investment activity in Plovdiv was close to the national average. The number of enterprises increased to 54 per 1,000 people or almost the same as the national average. FTA acquisition expenditures also increased to 2,637 BGN/person (vs. 2,973 BGN/person nationally). The district lagged more significantly in attracting FDI. After a drop in investment was registered in 2014, in 2015 investment grew slightly once again but at 2,368 BGN/person remained way below the cumulative national average level of 3,250 BGN/person as of the end of that year.

EU fund utilization was also relatively low in the district. As of 30th June 2017 sums paid to beneficiaries in the district reached 1,044 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person nationally). The municipalities of Hisarya and Krichim with over 3,000 BGN/person each were once again the ones with highest utilized funds while at the other end were those of

Brezovo, Rodopi and Sadovo which had utilized less than 500 BGN/person.

🚆 Infrastructure ●●●●●

Because of its geographic location, densely populated areas and numerous municipalities, Plovdiv is one of the districts with the highest density of the railroad network. The road density and the share of highways and first class roads in Plovdiv are close to, though lower than, national average levels. In 2016, however, railroad quality remained considerably higher than the national average level: 48% of road surfaces were in good condition compared with 42% in the country as a whole.

In 2016 Plovdiv was among the districts which had the highest share of households with Internet access and the highest share of people who used the Internet – both indicators rose to reach over 68% (vs. 64% and 63% respectively in the country as a whole).

% Taxes and Fees ●●

The average size of local taxes and fees in the municipalities of the district was above average in 2017. Several municipalities raised tax rates compared to 2016. The greatest difference was in the size of the tax on vehicles and automobiles from 74 to 110 kW and the license tax on retail trade for up to 100 sq. m at the best locations. The tax for taxi passenger transport was also higher due to its relatively higher rate in the municipality of the city of Plovdiv.

Property transfer tax as well as immovable property tax for legal entities in the district's municipalities were close to national average levels.

💼 Administration ●●●

The administration's evaluations for development of electronic government and one-stop shop services in the district's municipalities were close to average but lower in 2017. At the same time, the transparency rating of the administration in the district was slightly above average. The municipal administrations rated as most transparent were the city of Plovdiv and Assenovgrad, while the least transparent ones were Stamboliyski and Kaloyanovo.

Cadastral coverage in the district remained higher than the national average rate though it did not increase much in the last five years. Eight of the eighteen municipalities in the district still had no cadastral maps in 2016.

⛭ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

⛭ Demography ●●●●●

The demographic picture in the district was considerably more favorable than that in the country as a whole. The ageing process was continuing, though its rate and depth were moderate in 2016. Plovdiv was one of the five districts in the country which managed to attract migrants from other districts and the net migration rate remained on the positive side. The natural growth rate of –5‰ was slightly more favorable than the national average of –6‰.

The population in the district's towns (75.2%) increased and remained above the national average rate of 73.3% in 2016, which explains the higher population density of Plovdiv district.

⛭ Education ●●●

The net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade in the district of Plovdiv registered a further decrease in 2016 and remained below average. At the same time, the share of repeaters as well as that of dropouts from primary and secondary education remained considerably above national levels.

The tradition of performing well at matriculation exams was continued in 2017. At the exam in BLL students from the district got some of the highest grades, the average reaching 4.33 (vs. 4.22 nationally). Poor grades were relatively few: 6% vs. 8% in the country as a whole.

Declining numbers of university students in Plovdiv followed the national general trend though in 2016 the district ranked among the first in student number relative to the population.

⛭ Healthcare ●●●●

Relative to the population, the number of doctors in Plovdiv remained higher than the national average in 2016. There were 1,595 people per GP (vs. 1,611 nationally) and 421 people per specialist (vs. 530 nationally).

The number of beds in local general hospitals kept increasing in 2016, ranking Plovdiv in the first place in the country with 7.4 beds per 1,000 people compared with the national average of 5.1 beds per 1,000 people. The availability of sufficient doctors and hospital beds comes as an explanation of the fact that Plovdiv was the district with the greatest number of hospitalizations for the second year in a row in 2016: 408 per 1,000 people compared with the national average of 235 per 1,000 people.

⚖ Security and Justice ●●●

Though judges in the district were among the most overloaded ones in the country, in 2016 once again administration of justice was relatively speedy. A criminal judge saw an average of 13.2 cases a month compared with the national average of 9.4 cases a month. At the same time, 95% of cases at the district court were closed within three months (vs. 89% nationally) while pending cases were 5% (vs. 8% nationally).

The district of Plovdiv retained its relatively low registered crime rate in 2016. Registered crimes against the person and property dropped to 9.1 per 1,000 people compared with the national average of 12.6 per 1,000 people. Along with the dropping crime rate there was a rise in the crime clearance rate for the third year in a row and in 2016 it overtook the national average rate. Almost 55% of registered crimes during that year were cleared while the national rate was 48%.

🍃 Environment ●●●

The relatively high urbanization rate and population density in Plovdiv come as an explanation for the high access to sewerage in the district. In 2015, 80% of the population lived in areas with public sewerage systems (vs. national average rate 76%), while 64% had access to sewerage connected with wastewater treatment plants (vs. 62% on average in the country).

Atmospheric pollution with carbon dioxide remained below the national average but the amount of generated household waste was above average in 2015. Carbon dioxide emissions amounted to 137 t/sq. km (vs. 324 t/sq. km nationally) and generated household waste rose to 521 kg/person (vs. 422 kg/person nationally).

🎭 Culture ●●

The fastest growing interest and the greatest number of visits for 2016 were registered in cinemas. Cinema visits reached 967 per 1,000 people (vs. 778 per 1,000 people nationally). On the other hand, library visits registered the most significant decline that year: 118 per 1,000 people, far below the national average of 605 per 1,000 people.

In 2016 there were 246 theatre visits per 1,000 people in the district (vs. 322 per 1,000 people nationwide) and 436 museum visits per 1,000 people (vs. 734 per 1,000 people for the country).

Key Indicators for the District of Plovdiv

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,967	9,138	9,440	9,295	10,173	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,657	3,988	4,514	4,410	4,300	4,381
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,889	7,418	7,922	8,504	9,084	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	20.3	19.3	23.1	19.9	22.6	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	64.2	67.7	70.7	71.7	68.8	66.5
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	58.4	60.0	61.2	62.2	62.1	62.0
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	8.8	11.2	13.4	13.1	9.6	6.8
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	23.6	22.6	23.4	25.1	25.4	25.2
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	50	51	51	52	54	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	2,144	2,514	2,291	2,422	2,637	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,847	1,972	2,430	2,284	2,368	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	47.5	55.1	60.7	45.0	61.7	68.4
Share of roads in good condition (%)	47.5	48.0	43.7	44.5	47.1	47.6
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	24.4	24.4	24.4	24.4	24.4	24.6

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−3.8	−4.5	−4.0	−4.3	−4.9	−5.1
Net migration rate (‰)	0.2	1.4	3.1	0.5	1.4	2.6
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.53	4.29	4.34	4.34	4.31	4.27
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	3.18	5.03	4.91	4.56	7.04	8.61
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	82.3	80.7	79.5	78.8	78.0	77.7
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.4	87.7	86.5	87.2	88.4	87.7
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	228.0	327.8	353.0	242.2	412.1	408.0
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.9	10.9	11.3	10.6	10.3	9.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	35.3	33.6	32.1	34.4	37.8	54.5
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	5.9	5.3	5.4	14.6	5.4	5.2
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	54.1	54.3	54.6	54.9	64.1	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	141.6	151.0	127.6	131.7	137.0	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	799	703	769	808	869	967
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	204	190	250	299	259	246

Razgrad District

▶ Population (2016)	116,322
▶ Area (sq. km)	2,639.7
▶ Number of settlements	119
▶ Share of urban population (%)	47.2

KUBRAT
ZAVET
ISPERIH
Tsar Kaloyan
RAZGRAD
SAMUIL
LOZNITSA

Overview

Low income has been a major cause of the relatively high level of poverty in Razgrad district. Poor investment activity, low employment levels, and high unemployment are all rooted in the unfavorable educational structure of the population. The average rates of the principal local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities were once again close to the national average in 2017. Traditionally, the evaluations of the municipal administration's work have been above average.

In the last few years, population ageing was increasingly fast in the district. Razgrad was among the districts with the highest enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade once again in 2016 though the district's average grade at matriculation exams was still lagging behind. Razgrad remained one of the districts with the greatest shortage of doctors. Registered crimes were relatively few and their clearance rate was high. Low urbanization and low population density in the district made connecting people to sewerage difficult though the entire network is serviced by wastewater treatment plants. In 2016 the district of Razgrad joined the top three districts in terms of library visits.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			
Income and Living Conditions	●	●	●		
Labor Market	●	●			
Investment	●	●			
Infrastructure	●	●			
Taxes and Fees	●	●	●		
Administration	●	●	●	●	

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			
Demography	●	●	●		
Education	●	●	●		
Healthcare	●	●			
Security and Justice	●	●	●	●	
Environment	●	●			
Culture	●	●	●		
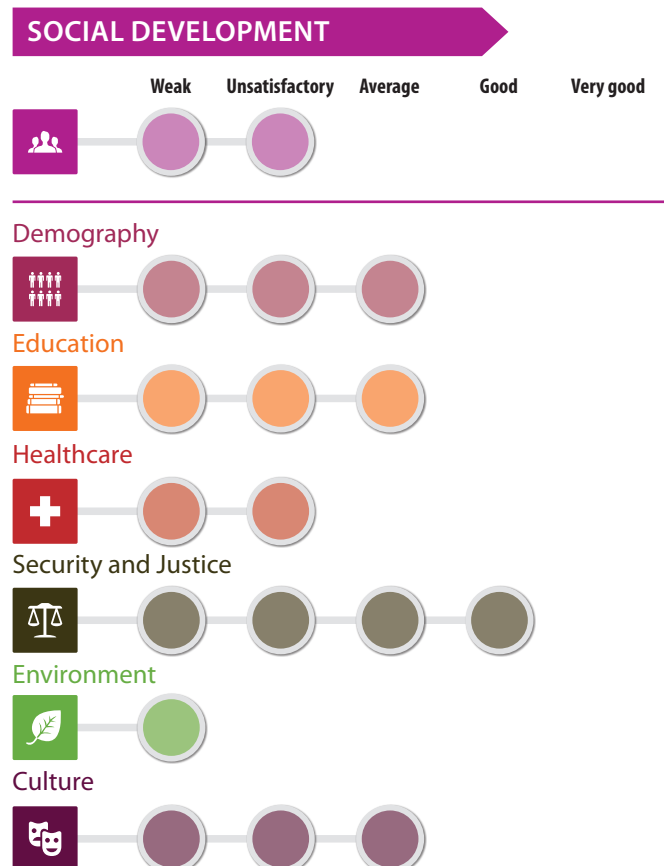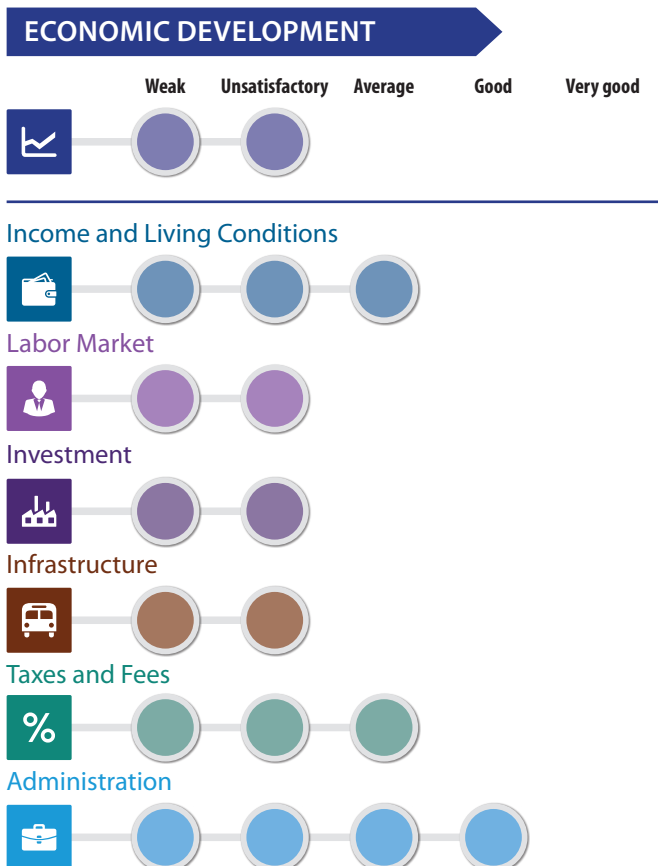
📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

👛 Income and Living Conditions ●●●

In 2015 the economy in the district of Razgrad interrupted its five-year long upward trend of GDP per capita as GDP dropped to 7,778 BGN. The shrinkage was by 5% while in the country as a whole there was a 7% growth. This left the district's GDP far from the national average of 12,339 BGN/person in 2015.

In the meantime, salaries kept their stable growth to reach 8,702 BGN annually (vs. 10,535 BGN nationally) but income growth slowed down reaching 4,182 BGN/household member (vs. 5,167 BGN nationally) in 2016.

Low incomes explain the relatively lower living standard in the district. The share of population living in material deprivation and that of people living below the national poverty line in Razgrad remained higher than national average levels once again in 2015.

👤 Labor Market ●●

Economic activity in the district (65.5%) remained below the national average of 68.7% once again in 2016. Employment increased but was still considerably below the national average: 56.0% vs. the national average at 63.4%. At the same time, the unemployment rate remained among the highest in the country though it kept dropping after the beginning of post-crisis recovery. In 2016 it reached 14.6% (vs. 7.7% nationally).

Labor market problems were related to the deteriorated educational structure of the population aged 25–64. In 2016 the share of people with tertiary education in the district was 18% (vs. 28% nationally) while that of people with primary and lower education was twice that size – 36% (vs. 18% nationally).

🏭 Investment ●●

Entrepreneurial activity remained low in the district. Razgrad was one of the districts with the smallest relative number of working enterprises in 2015: 35 per 1,000 people while the national rate was 55 per 1,00 people. Investment was relatively low though FTA acquisition expenditures rose once again in 2015 to reach 1,865 BGN/person (vs. 2,973 BGN/person nationally). In FDI there was an outflow to 901 euro/person (vs. 3,250 euro/person cumulative rate in the country as a whole) as of the end of 2015.

EU fund utilization was also low in the district. As of 30th June 2017 the sums paid to beneficiaries from operational programs reached 1,159 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person nationally). Kubrat and Isperih were the municipalities with most utilized funds, while those in Tsar Kaloyan and Samuil utilized least funds.

🚌 Investment ●●

Road density was higher in Razgrad than in the country as a whole but the share of highways and first class roads remained considerably lower in 2015: 11% (vs. 19% nationally). The quality of roads was also dramatically lower. In 2016 only 28% of road surfaces were in good quality while in Bulgaria as a whole they were 42%.

The share of households with Internet access was close to the national average in 2016 but the share of people using it remained considerably below average levels nationwide. 55% of the local inhabitants aged 16–74 had used the Internet in the previous 12 months compared with the national average rate of 63%.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●

The average level of the main local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities was close to the national average rate in 2017 once again. Not a single municipality made changes to its rates compared to 2016. The greatest difference was registered in the annual license tax for retailers and the annual taxi transport tax, both rates being lower in the district's municipalities. The average size of the annual license tax for retailers with up to 100 sq. m of sales space in Razgrad municipalities was 9.16 BGN for best shopping location of the space while it was 12.85 BGN in the country as a whole. The average rate of the tax taxi transport in the district on the other hand was 329 BGN annually while the national average rate was 525 BGN.

💼 Administration ●●●●

Evaluations on the work of municipal administrations in the district of Razgrad have traditionally been above average. Local administrations' self-evaluations for development of electronic government and availability of one-stop shop services rose in 2017, and remained slightly higher than their national average level. Municipal administrations' transparency on its part was evaluated as close to 63% that year while the national average rate was 59%. The administration of the city of Razgrad was once again the most transparent one with a rating of 79%.

With the increased coverage of the cadastral map in the municipality of Samuil in 2016 the district overtook the national average level (23% of the territory) with its 25%. Only the Zavet municipality had no coverage yet.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ●

Demography ● ● ●

In 2016, the age dependency ratio in the district was lower than the national average for the first time. The cause was the below-average natural population growth and intensive outmigration. In the last three years Razgrad's natural growth rate stayed around –8‰, while the national average rate was about –6‰. In 2016 the net migration rate dropped further to reach –7.7‰, which placed Razgrad among the five districts with the fastest net exodus.

In 2016 the district remained third (after those of Kardzhali and Silistra) in terms of least population living in urban areas – 47% in the district vs. 73% in the country as a whole. Razgrad was also one of the districts where population density was lowest: 879 people/sq. km while the national average was 1,548 people/sq. km.

Education ● ● ●

In 2016 Razgrad was once again among the districts with the highest enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade though that rate was on the decline following the general tendency in the country. At the same time, the share of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education remained above national average levels.

The average grade of Razgrad students at matriculation exams in BLL was once again lagging behind that of students elsewhere in the country in 2017: 3.92 in Razgrad vs. 4.22 nationally, whereas the share of fail grades was over 12% (vs. less than 8% nationally).

The number of students in the local branch of Ruse University (the single tertiary education establishment in the district) declined in the last academic year, following the general trend in the country.

Healthcare ● ●

Razgrad was one of the districts where the shortage of doctors was most serious. In 2016 there were 2,404 people per GP (vs. 1,611 people per GP nationally) and 754 people per specialist (vs. 530 nationally. The number of beds in general hospitals was comparable with the national average: 4.8 beds per 1,000 people (vs. 5.1 beds per 1,000 people nationally).

Razgrad continued to be among the districts with the highest share of health-insured people and that share even went up the previous year, while it dropped in the country as a whole, to reach 93% (vs. 88% nationally).

In 2016 infant mortality rates dropped dramatically to turn Razgrad into the district with the lowest infant mortality in the country.

Security and Justice ● ● ● ●

Judge workloads and the speed of justice administration in the district were close to the national average levels in 2016. A criminal judge at the district court saw an average of 9.1 cases a month (vs. 9.4 cases a month per judge nationally). In 2016 the share of pending criminal cases rose to overtake national average levels: it reached 8.7% when the national average rate was 8.3%. On the other hand, the share of cases closed within 3 months was traditionally higher in Razgrad district than it was in the country as a whole.

Razgrad was one of the districts with relatively small numbers of registered crimes and, following a tendency similar to that in other districts, their clearance rate significantly increased in 2016: registered crimes against the person and property were 9.9% per 1,000 people (vs. 12.6% per 1,000 people nationally) and cleared crimes reached 69%, considerably higher than the national clearance rate of 48%.

Environment ●

The relatively low urbanization and population density in Razgrad district entailed difficulties in sewerage connectivity. In 2015 once again the district had the lowest share of population living in areas with public sewerage – 42% (vs. 76% nationally). The entire sewerage system was connected with wastewater treatment plants.

Air pollution and generated household waste, on the other hand, were lower than national average rates. Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere were many times lower: 47 t/sq. km compared with the average of 324 t/sq. km in the country in 2015. Generated household waste dropped to 406 kg/person annually while the national average was 422 kg/person annually.

Culture ● ● ●

Since the opening of the first cinema in the district, visits were on the rise constantly to reach 148 per 1,000 people while the national average rate was 778 per 1,000 people in 2016. Museum visits in the district have also been increasing during the last few years reaching 421 per 1,000 people (vs. 743 per 1,000 people nationally). Visits to local theaters (313 per 1,000 people) remained close to the national average rate of 322 per 1,000 people.

In 2016 a peak was registered in library visits and Razgrad district joined the top three districts (after Veliko Tarnovo and Silistra) with the greatest number of visits: 1,416 per 1,000 people while the national average rate was 605 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Razgrad

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,775	7,621	7,890	8,182	7,778	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,753	3,131	3,264	4,000	4,164	4,182
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,488	7,065	7,533	8,351	8,702	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	37.5	16.4	20.8	28.1	28.2	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	63.1	64.7	63.4	64.2	65.6	65.5
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	50.2	50.7	50.2	52.8	55.6	56.0
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	20.3	21.4	20.7	17.7	15.0	14.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	12.9	14.0	13.7	16.2	18.7	18.4
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	33	33	33	33	35	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,020	1,363	1,314	1,518	1,865	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	962	1,028	1,065	956	901	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	42.2	58.1	51.2	59.4	58.1	64.3
Share of roads in good condition (%)	34.6	32.0	34.5	33.1	22.7	28.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9	25.0

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−6.4	−6.2	−7.0	−7.6	−8.3	−8.2
Net migration rate (‰)	−7.9	−5.4	−5.9	−5.3	−7.0	−7.7
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.08	3.82	3.90	3.91	3.88	3.84
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	7.63	12.09	12.15	10.80	12.91	15.43
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	84.9	85.3	86.0	85.2	84.7	84.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	91.1	90.0	89.3	90.3	92.4	93.0
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	202.4	210.5	232.0	227.2	225.5	222.3
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.3	9.2	9.7	8.7	9.4	9.9
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	61.8	62.7	63.4	64.3	61.4	68.7
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.2	9.1	8.7	9.0	4.5	8.7
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	41.9	41.9	41.8	41.8	41.8	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	41.2	39.0	54.6	47.4	46.9	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	0	0	25	29	148
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	149	196	258	288	312	313

Ruse District

▶ Population (2016)   224,582

▶ Area (sq. km)   2,803.4

▶ Number of settlements   88

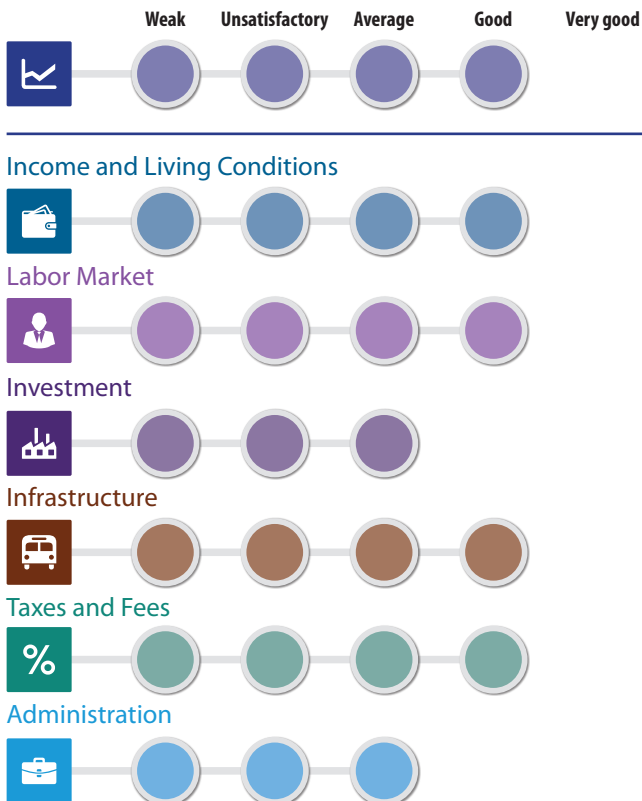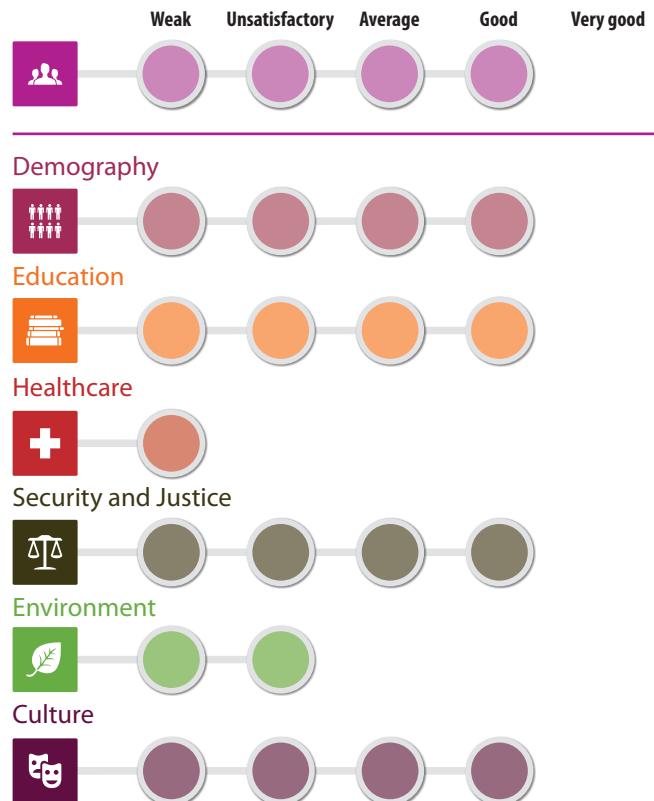▶ Share of urban population (%)   77.6

Overview

Though the district's GDP has been increasing, its growth has been considerably below national average. The increased activity of the working age population has led to simultaneous rising employment and falling unemployment. Investment activity in the district has been on the rise, generally, though staying below the average in the country. Road quality has continued deteriorating fast. Most local tax and fee rates have stayed below national average rates. The local administrations' transparency rating remains higher than the national average. During the last few years, population ageing has been faster and deeper in the district compared to the general national tendency – the main reason being the low rate of natural increase. Matriculation exam results of school leavers from the district have approached national average levels. Ruse is still one of the districts with the highest shortage of doctors. Justice administration in the district is characterized by relatively low workloads for judges and high shares of cases closed within 3 months. The district is also characterized by high connectivity to wastewater treatment plants. Cultural life has been relatively intensive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Income and Living Conditions

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Labor Market

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Investment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Infrastructure

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Taxes and Fees

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Administration

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Demography

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Education

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Healthcare

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Security and Justice

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Environment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Culture

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

GDP per capita kept increasing in 2015 but its growth rate of 2% was considerably below the average 7% for the country as a whole: the district's GDP reached almost 10,000 BGN while the national average level went over 12,000 BGN.

Salaries in the district also kept growing to reach 8,563 BGN annually while they reached 12,535 BGN in the country. In 2013 and 2014 incomes per household member had dropped to below-national average levels but in 2015 and 2016 Ruse was once again among the districts with incomes above national average albeit with a small difference: 5,263 BGN annually in the district vs. 5,167 on average in the country.

In 2015, the share of people living in material deprivation shrank in the district whereas that of people living below the national poverty line increased considerably. Yet, the values for both indicators were close to national average figures.

Labor Market ●●●●

Economic activity increased considerably in the district to 66.8% in 2016, thus approaching the national average level of 68.7%. The rising activity of the working age population brought about a simultaneous rise in employment and drop in unemployment. However, unemployment remained below average for the fourth year in a row, whereas employment failed to compensate the difference and stayed lower. In 2016 Ruse's employment rate was 62.2% while the national average was 63.4%; the unemployment rate was 7.0% vs. 7.7% nationally.

The educational structure of the population aged 25–64 improved in the last few years to levels close to the national average in 2016. At the same time, the ratio of demographic replacement remained low at 55.1% while the national average rate was 62.8%. In other words, there were fewer young people aged 15–19 to replace the people aged 60–64 facing retirement.

Investment ●●●

On the whole, investment activity in the district increased, the number of non-financial enterprises increased to 50 per 1,000 people (vs. 55 per 1,000 people nationally) in 2015. FTA acquisition expenses also increased to reach 2,227 BGN/person (vs. 2,973 BGN/person nationally).

However, FDI was lagging considerably in 2015, and there was even a 13% outflow to 1,501 euro/person cumulative as of the end of the year. By way of comparison, the national average FDI rate was almost twice that size: 3,350 euro/person.

EU fund utilization increased but was also below average. As of 30th June 2017 sums paid to beneficiaries from operational programs in the district reached 1,012 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person nationally). Once again, the municipality of Byala utilized most funds, while that of Borovo utilized least.

Infrastructure ●●●●

Ruse is one of the chief logistics centers in the country so the density of both road and railroad networks was higher than the national average. The share of both highways and first class roads was bigger, too: 21.5% in 2015 (vs. 18.6% in the country as a whole). However, road quality was deteriorating fast and in 2016 Ruse was the district with the lowest share of road surfaces in good condition, 17.7% compared to the national average rate of 41.5%.

Internet access and usage in the district have remained higher than national average rates.

Taxes and Fees ●●●●

In view of the fact that most local taxes and fees have been relatively low, the rating of Ruse in this category is good. The one exception is the annual license tax for retailers, the district average rate of which was relatively high in 2017. The reason was the high rate in the municipality of the city of Ruse – 17 BGN/sq. m for best shopping location while the remaining municipalities in the district had rates about 4 BGN/sq. m. The Ruse municipality was also the only one in the district to raise a local tax in 2017 – that on immovable property of legal entities.

Administration ●●●

In 2017 the local administration's self-evaluation for development of electronic government and one-stop shop services in the district dropped, although it grew in the country as a whole. Still, the district remained among the best in promoting one-stop shop services. However, the transparency rating of local administrations rose and remained above the national average level. The city municipality of Ruse was once again rated as the most transparent one in the district while the least transparent municipal administrations were those in Slivo Pole and Byala.

Some development was also noticeable in the range of the district's cadastral map. In 2016 over 8,000 hectares of the Byala municipality were added to the cadastral map which raised the share of covered territory to 13% (vs. 23% nationally). The municipalities of Tsenovo and Vetovo still had 0% coverage.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Demography ●●●●

Population ageing has been faster and deeper in the district of Ruse compared to the general tendency in the country as a whole. Thus in 2016 the ratio of age dependency as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 was 181.2% (vs. 147.1% nationally). The main reason for the accelerated ageing trend is the low rate of natural increase. It remained –8.6‰ in 2016 (vs. –6.0‰ nationally). The net migration rate on the other hand dropped to –1.1‰ that year but its rates remained within the limits of the last 15 years.

The share of urban population in the district of Ruse was relatively high in 2016: 78% (vs. 73% nationally), which was related to the fact that the relatively high population density in the district (1,727 people/sq. km vs. 1,548 people/sq. km on average in the country) had been preserved.

Security and Justice ●●●●

Administration of justice in the district of Ruse was characterized by relatively low workloads for judges and relatively speedy justice in 2016 again. Local criminal judges at the district court saw an average of 8.0 cases a month while the national average was 9.4 cases a month per judge. The share of cases closed within 3 months was 96% (vs. 89% nationally) and that of pending cases (4%) remained lower than the national average share of over 8%.

In 2016, the relative number of registered crimes in the district declined for the third year in a row to reach 8.9 per 1.000 people while the national average rate was 12.6 per 1,000 people. At the same time, the clearance rate rose to 51% thus overtaking the national average of 48%.

Education ●●●●

The tendency to a relatively fast decline in the number of children enrolled in 5th–8th grade was confirmed in the district in 2016. At 75.1% it stayed below the national average rate of 78.2% for the second year in a row. The shares of repeaters and dropouts were similar to national average levels.

The 2017 matriculation exam results of students in the district were close to the national average. The district average grade at the exam in BLL was 4.17, while the national average was 4.22; the respective shares of fail grades were 6.19% for the district and 7.98% for the country.

The diminishing number of university students in the district has followed the national tendency for the fourth successive year.

Environment ●●

In 2015 carbon dioxide emissions dropped to 199 t/sq. km while the national average rate rose to 324 t/sq. km. Generated household waste in the district also dropped (to 508 kg/person annually) but it remained considerably above the national average of 422 kg/person for 2015.

Though a relatively large part of the district's population was living in urban areas, the share of people living in areas with public sewerage (68.1%) remained below the national average of 75.5% in 2015. At the same time, the recently built wastewater treatment plants (in 2011) increased the share of the population with access to sewerage connected to wastewater treatment plants and it reached 64.6% (vs. 62.3% nationally).

Healthcare ●

In 2016 once again the district of Ruse remained one of those with the most serious doctor shortages. There were 2,128 people per local GP (vs. 1,611 per GP on average in the country); there were 609 people per specialist while the national average rate was 530 per specialist.

The ratio of hospital beds to the population also remained lower, though rising for the fifth year in a row. The number of beds in general hospitals reached 4.4 per 1,000 people (vs. 5.1 per 1,000 people nationally).

Despite doctor shortages and the relative limited number of beds, hospitalizations had been increasing in the last few years to overtake the national average number for the first time in 2016.

Culture ●●●●

Cultural life in the district was relatively intensive in 2016 once again. The relative number of visits to local theaters retained a level almost twice the national average: 607 visits per 1,000 people with the national rate at 322 visits per 1,000 people. Cinema visits were also numerous: 815 visits per 1,000 people vs. 778 on average in the country.

Local museums enjoyed less interest: in 2016, museum visits dropped to 404 per 1,000 people while the average national rate was 734 per 1,000 people.

In 2016, a sharp drop was also registered in library visits in Ruse to below-average levels relative to the population.

Key Indicators for the District of Ruse

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,198	8,629	8,939	9,694	9,912	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,071	4,416	4,504	4,553	5,303	5,263
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,783	7,155	7,589	8,028	8,563	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	17.0	14.6	16.3	12.1	21.4	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	65.6	66.4	66.0	63.5	65.9	66.8
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	58.0	57.8	57.7	56.6	60.0	62.2
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	11.6	12.9	12.5	10.8	9.0	7.0
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	22.0	22.1	23.6	23.6	24.4	26.8
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	47	47	47	48	50	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,647	1,813	1,907	2,039	2,227	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,428	1,493	1,616	1,686	1,501	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	43.2	51.4	57.6	64.6	60.9	72.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	23.9	26.0	29.0	30.2	26.0	17.7
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	10.2	10.2	10.2	10.2	10.2	13.2

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−8.1	−8.1	−8.0	−8.5	−8.6	−8.6
Net migration rate (‰)	0.8	−1.4	0.2	−0.7	−0.2	−1.1
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.43	4.11	4.27	4.20	4.21	4.19
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	3.71	5.97	4.63	5.57	5.21	5.43
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	81.7	80.1	80.2	78.7	77.8	75.1
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	89.4	88.2	86.6	87.1	88.3	87.7
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	152.4	164.0	185.5	162.7	215.1	235.7
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.9	12.3	13.5	12.0	10.1	8.9
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	33.7	29.9	27.0	30.8	36.1	51.4
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	4.4	3.9	3.1	11.7	6.3	3.9
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	63.7	63.9	64.2	64.5	64.6	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	304.4	225.1	208.3	208.3	199.1	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	1,097	753	760	769	816	815
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	474	444	515	569	645	607

Shumen District

▶ Population (2016)	175,098
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,389.7
▶ Number of settlements	152
▶ Share of urban population (%)	61.8

Overview

Income and living standard in the district of Shumen kept increasing, though staying below national average. Shumen was one of the districts with the highest economic activity of the population but also with the highest unemployment. Investment activity in the district remained relatively low though infrastructural development was relatively good. The average rate of local taxes and fees was close to national average. A considerable part of local administrations retained a relatively poor transparency. Indicators of the population's age structure were relatively favorable. The numerous new teachers employed in the district raised the district of Shumen to the second place for the highest number of teachers relative to the number of students. Shumen was one of the districts with the acutest shortage of specialist doctors and the most limited hospital capacity. Judges' workloads in the district have traditionally been below national average, which has contributed to speedier justice administration. Air pollution and generated waste remain considerably below the average in the country. Local museums and libraries keep attracting numerous visitors.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
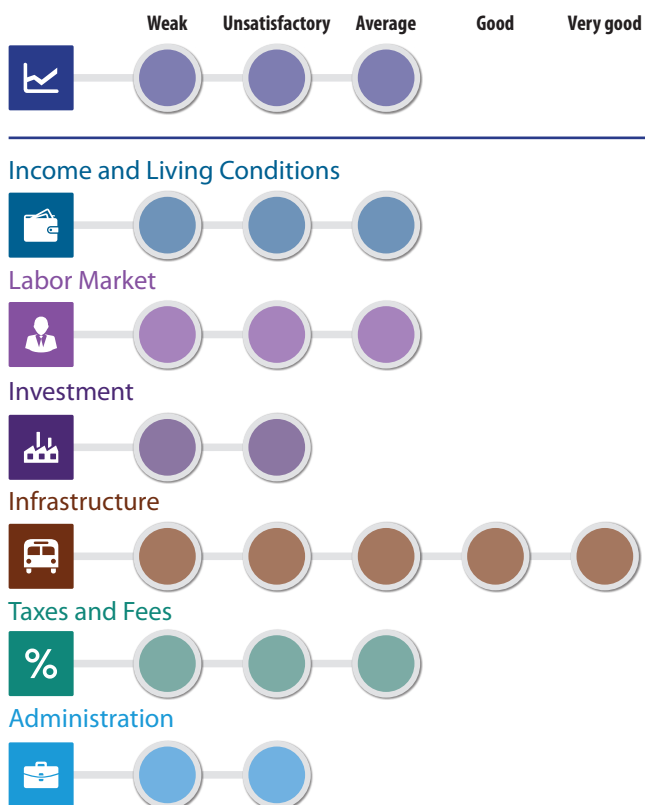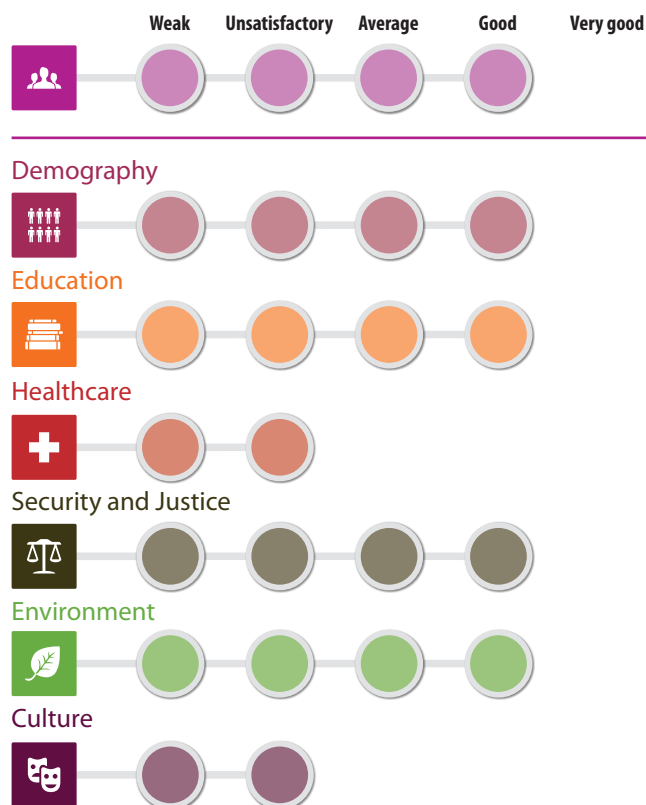
📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

💼 Income and Living Conditions ●●●

In 2015 once again GDP per capita in the district of Shumen kept increasing to reach 7,577 BGN/person though it remained below the national average level of 12,339 BGN/person. Salaries and incomes also rose with every year but they were lower, too, compared to the national average. In 2016 once again the share of incomes from pensions was relatively higher whereas those from salaries and other employment remained lower.

The rise of GDP, salaries and incomes in the district led to a rise in the local population's living standard. In 2015 a considerable decline in the share of population living in material deprivation was registered as well as that of the population living below the national poverty line, though both indicators remained below national average.

👤 Labor Market ●●●

Shumen kept its place among the districts with the highest economic activity of the population; in 2016 it rose to 74% while the national average rate was 69%. At the same time, employment rose while unemployment dropped. Nevertheless, the employment rate remained below national average while the unemployment rate in the district was the highest in the country: over 17% while the national average rate was under 8% in 2016.

Improvement in the labor market was limited by the relatively unfavorable educational structure of the population. In 2016 the number of people aged 25–64 with university degrees decreased to reach 22% (vs. 28% nationally) while the number of people with primary or lower education increased to reach 30% (vs. 18% nationally).

The demographic replacement ratio in the district (67%) continued to exceed the average one in the country (63%). That means almost 67 young people were about to replace 100 people leaving the labor market.

🏭 Investment ●●

Investment activity in Shumen remained relatively low. The number of working enterprises in the district rose slightly from 38 to 39 per 1,000 people, which was still considerably below the national average of 55 per 1,000 people. The cumulative FDI in 2015 also retained a relatively low level: 590 euro/person (vs. 3,250 euro/person in the country).

A faster growth was registered in FTA investment and EU fund utilization though both indicators had lower rates than national average ones relative to the population. FTA expenditures in 2015 reached 2,030 BGN/person (vs. 2,973 BGN/person in the country). As of 30th June 2017 sums paid in the district from operational programs rose

to 1,111 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person nationally). The municipality which absorbed most funds was that of Novi Pazar while that with least funds was that of Hitrino.

🚌 Infrastructure ●●●●●

Infrastructural development in the district continued to be much better than its average level in the country in 2016. The main reason was the fact that Shumen is the district with the highest share of highways and first class roads – mainly because of the "Hemus" highway – 36% compared with the national average of 19%. That fact as well as the highway's rehabilitation in 2016 also explain the high share of road surfaces in good condition: 56% in the district vs. 42% in the country. Besides, road network density in the district also remained above national average.

Internet usage in the district was close to national average levels.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●

The average rates of local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities remained close to the national average in 2017. Local taxes exceeding those levels were that on property transfer and on vehicles though in the case of the latter the difference shrank due to the lowered rate in the Varbitsa municipality. In 2017 there was a single case of raised tax: that on immovable property of legal entities in the municipality of Kaolinovo.

The annual license tax on retail trade and that on taxi transport remained considerably below average.

💼 Administration ●●

In 2017 self-evaluations of municipal administrations for development of electronic government and offered one-stop shop services in the district were slightly below national average. The AI Foundation's transparency rating of local government was lower as well: 47% in the district vs. 59% in the country. The lowest rating in the district was that of the Venets municipality (under 40%), while Smyadovo and Hitrino had the highest ratings of over 60%.

Cadastral map coverage of the district's territory did not increase in 2016, though it retained a level higher than the national average: 30% (vs. 23% nationally). Two of the ten municipalities in the district of Shumen, those of Venets and Nikola Kozlevo, still have a cadastral coverage of 0%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Demography ●●●●●

Age structure indicators in the district have on the whole been more favorable than national average levels.

The district of Shumen has been characterized by above-average natural increase rates in the last 15 years. In 2014 and 2015, however, the rate deteriorated considerably to reach −6.5‰ in 2015 when the national average rate was −6.0‰. In 2016 it rose to −5.6‰, an above-average level. Between 2012 and 2015 migration processes in Shumen were more favorable than national average rates but in 2016 the net migration rate worsened and reached −1.5‰ when the national average rate was −1.3‰. Shumen kept its place among the districts with a relatively low rate of urban population. In 2016 its rate even dropped for the sixth year in a row (while there was an upward tendency in the country) to reach 61.8% (vs.73.3% nationally). Population density in the district also remained considerably below the national average level.

Education ●●●●●

The enrolment rate of children in 5th–8th grade declined in the district in 2016, following the national trend, though it remained above national average. On the other hand, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education increased in 2015 and 2016; yet they stayed below average in the last monitored year. Employing numerous new teachers in the district in 2016 (almost 200) raised it to the second position after Smolyan in highest number of teachers relative to the number of students in schools.

Student performance at the matriculation exams improved in the district but in 2017 it was once again below average. At the exam in BLL students from Shumen got an average grade of 4.10 while the national average grade was 4.22, and the share of fail grades dropped by 1 p.p. to under 9% (vs. 8% nationally).

Like the general trend in university enrolment in the country, the number of students in the district declined though Shumen University still accounted for the district's relatively good performance in the student-to-population rate.

Healthcare ●●

Though the number of GPs relative to the population in the district was relatively higher, in 2016 there was still a shortage of medical specialists in it. Shumen was one of the districts with the most limited capacity of medical facilities and the number of beds in general hospitals declined for the second year in a row to reach 2.8 per 1,000 people (vs. 5.1 per 1,000 people nationally). That explains the de-cline in the number of patients in local hospitals in the last two years which reached 135 per 1,000 people (vs. 235 per 1,000 people nationally).

In the district there has been a clear downward tendency in infant mortality in recent years; in 2016 its rate reached its lowest level in the last decade and was below the national average for the first time.

Security and Justice ●●●●

Local judges' workloads at the district court have traditionally been below the national average level, which explains the greater speed of justice administration in the district in 2016. The share of criminal cases completed within 3 months was 94% (vs. 78% nationally) while that of pending cases was below 6% (vs. over 8% nationally).

The relative share of registered crimes in the district was also below average and kept going down in 2016 which resulted in a rise in clearance rate to 63% when the national average was 48%.

Environment ●●●●

Air pollution and generated waste in Shumen remained considerably below average once again in 2015. Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere relative to the territory were about ten times lower than they were in the country as a whole. Generated household waste dropped to reach 301 kg/person annually while the national average rate was 422 kg/person.

On the other hand, the population's access to sewerage and wastewater treatment plants remained limited. In 2015 the share of population living in areas with public sewerage systems was 59% (vs. 76% nationally) and that of population connected with wastewater treatment plants reached 55% (vs. 62% nationally). Since the end of 2016 the newest wastewater treatment plant in the district has been in operation, so this indicator's value could be expected to further go up in 2016 data.

Culture ●●

The relative number of visits to cinemas and theaters in Shumen district remained considerably below average. At the same time, local museums and libraries kept attracting visitors: in 2016 museum visits in the district reached 1,097 per 1,000 people (vs. 734 per 1,000 people nationally) while library visits reached 931 per 1,000 people (vs. 605 per 1,000 people nationally).

Key Indicators for the District of Shumen

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,694	7,062	7,280	7,397	7,577	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,427	3,944	4,333	4,387	4,772	4,845
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,499	7,068	7,405	7,968	8,505	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	27.5	30.1	25.0	36.9	29.4	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	73.9	75.0	74.7	74.7	73.0	74.2
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	53.9	54.9	55.1	58.7	58.5	61.3
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	26.8	26.6	26.0	21.1	19.7	17.4
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	20.4	20.7	21.3	24.2	24.0	21.9
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	36	37	37	38	39	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,069	1,429	1,333	1,499	2,030	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	506	590	609	591	590	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	33.7	44.7	49.8	48.2	65.6	57.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	18.9	19.0	36.3	35.1	42.5	55.9
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	19.8	19.8	19.8	19.8	30.0	30.0

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−4.8	−5.7	−4.6	−6.3	−6.5	−5.6
Net migration rate (‰)	−1.0	0.4	0.4	−0.1	−0.3	−1.5
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.32	4.00	3.99	4.06	4.05	3.95
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	7.63	8.90	8.09	8.87	6.74	9.78
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	85.7	84.4	82.4	81.3	80.0	78.4
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	89.6	88.4	87.5	88.1	89.6	88.9
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	124.2	132.8	147.7	151.7	148.0	135.4
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.8	10.7	10.3	9.0	9.4	9.0
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	54.0	54.7	54.5	51.4	55.1	62.7
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	4.7	5.4	6.5	10.3	6.8	5.8
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	44.8	44.8	44.8	44.7	55.2	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	29.5	26.1	29.2	29.1	34.2	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	12	0	0	135	137	123
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	149	176	166	245	227	202

Silistra District

▶ Population (2016)	112,603
▶ Area (sq. km)	2,846.3
▶ Number of settlements	118
▶ Share of urban population (%)	44.3

Overview

Salaries and incomes increased during the last few years but remained considerably below the national average figure. The indicators of the district's labor market placed it last in the country. Investment activity in the district continued to be relatively low. Road quality was relatively high. The average rates of local taxes and fees in the municipalities of the Silistra district were below the national average rates. The work of municipal administrations got low ratings. Population ageing in Silistra district has been faster and more clearly expressed than the general processes in the country. Matriculation exam results rose in 2017, while remaining considerably below national average figures. Healthcare in the district suffered from doctor shortages and a limited hospital capacity. Silistra was among the districts with relatively low court workloads, low crime rates and high clearance rates. The low urbanization level in the district comes as an explanation for the exceptionally low sewerage connectivity of the population. The intensity of cultural life in Silistra has been relatively low.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Income and Living Conditions

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Labor Market

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Investment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Infrastructure

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Taxes and Fees

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Administration

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Demography

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Education

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Healthcare

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Security and Justice

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Environment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Culture

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and Living Conditions

GDP per capita in the district rose for the third successive year in 2015 but its growth was insignificant in view of its low base. That year it remained over two times lower than the country average: 5,933 BGN/person vs. 12,339 BGN/person in the country.

In recent years, salaries and incomes in the district have increased as well, though staying considerably below national average levels. The annual average income per household member in 2016 reached 3,922 BGN while the national average was 5,167 BGN/person.

The relatively low incomes have been the reason behind the relatively high share of the population living in material deprivation in the district – though it was above average levels, in 2015 the difference was not big. The share of the local population living below the national poverty line was also close to the national average level.

Labor Market

Once again, the indicators of the labor market placed the district last in the country.

Employment was still exceptionally low in 2016, though it rose by 3 p.p. to 52.2% – thus overtaking the district of Vratsa as the district with the lowest employment. By way of comparison, the national level of employment was 63.4%. In 2016, when unemployment in Silistra also shrank dramatically (by 4.9 p.p.), Silistra lost the first place in unemployment to Shumen. Still, unemployment in Silistra at 16.9% remained over twice the national average of 7.7%.

One of the explanations behind the high unemployment in the district is the exceptionally unfavorable educational structure of the population. Among people aged 25–64 in the district 19% had university degrees in 2016 while the national average rate was 28%; 35% had primary or lower education (vs. 18% nationally).

Investment

Investment activity in the district remained relatively low though in 2015 a certain recovery was registered in it. FTA acquisition expenditures increased by over 50% compared with 2014 to reach 2,244 BGN/person and came close to the national average levels of 2,973 BGN/person. Silistra has been the district with the lowest FDI inflow so far, 2015 being the second year in a row with a net outflow. As of the end of 2015, FDI in the district was 256 euro/person while the national average rate was 3,250 euro/person.

Silistra was also slow in EU fund utilization. As of 30th June 2017 the sums paid from operational programs were

929 BGN/person compared with the national average of 1,344 BGN/person. The municipality with most utilized funds was Silistra and that with least utilized funds was Dulovo.

Infrastructure

In view of the district's location in Bulgaria's periphery, the road and railroad density in Silistra district is below average. So is the share of highways and first class roads. Yet, road quality remains high. In 2016 the share of road surfaces in good condition was 53% (vs. 42% nationally).

The share of households with Internet access as well as that of people who used it remained considerably below average in 2016 once again.

Taxes and Fees

The average local taxes and fees in the district of Silistra were once again below national average levels in 2017. This difference was particularly conspicuous in the rate of the annual license tax for retailers. Even in the municipalities where this rate was highest, Tutrakan and Dulovo, each with 12 BGN/sq. m, it was below the national average of almost 13 BGN/sq. m.

In 2017 not a single one of the Silistra municipalities changed its rates for the basic local taxes and fees.

Administration

The overall evaluation of the local administration's work was not good and the district took the last but one place in this category.

The administration's self-evaluation for the development of electronic government and one-stop shop services in the district's municipalities continued to be below average in 2017 once again. Local government transparency was also relatively low, the poorest results being those in Dulovo and Kainardzha, while the best were those in the municipality of Alfatar.

The cadastral map coverage of the district's territory was also slow. In 2016 coverage remained at 16.2% (vs. 22.5% national average). The municipality of Kainardzha still has 0% coverage.

⬛ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●

▦ Demography ● ● ●

Population ageing in the district is faster and more clearly expressed than in the rest of the country. In 2016 the age dependency ratio as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 reached 169.8% while the national average rate was 147.1%. Low birthrates as well as outmigration were the reasons for this result. In 2016 the natural increase rate rose but remained below the national average. However, in the last few years a shrinking net migration rate became noticeable.

Silistra was among the districts with the lowest share of urban population (it is lower only in the district of Kardzhali) of 44.3% (vs. 73.3% nationally). The population density of 867 people/sq. km is also two times lower than the national average rate of 1,548 people/sq. km.

▦ Education ● ●

In 2016 the share of children enrolled in 5th–8th grade dropped to 76.6% compared to 78.2% nationwide. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education, however, continued to be lower than the national average.

Matriculation exam results improved in 2017, and Silistra was no longer the district with the lowest grades. The average grade at the exam in BLL in the district was 3.95 (vs. 4.22 nationally). The share of fail grades was almost twice the national average: 13.25% in the district compared to 7.98% in the country.

The number of teachers in the district has been on the increase but also without reaching over the national average line. The number of university students on its part has been declining in tune with the national tendency.

✚ Healthcare ●

As previously, healthcare in the district suffered from shortages of medical personnel and insufficient hospital capacity. In 2016 there were 1,964 people per GP (vs. 1,611 people per GP in the country) and 751 people per specialist (vs. 530 nationally). Hospital beds increased in 2016 but stayed below the national average level: 4.4 per 1,000 people vs. 5.1 per 1,000 people nationally.

Doctor shortages and the relatively small number of hospital beds are possible explanations for the small number of hospitalizations in the district: 217 per 1,000 people (vs. 235 per 1,000 people nationally).

There was a positive tendency in infant mortality in 2016: for the second successive year the rate kept dropping to reach a level below the national average.

⚖ Security and Justice ● ● ● ●

In 2016 once again Silistra was among the districts with relatively low workloads for judges: a criminal judge at the district court saw an average of 6.2 cases a month while the national average number was 9.4 cases a month. Despite the low workloads, however, the speed of justice in Silistra did not differ much from that in the rest of Bulgaria. The share of cases closed within 3 months was 91% while the national average rate was 89%, and the share of pending cases was over 10% (vs. 8% nationally).

Silistra was one of the districts with relatively few registered crimes against the person and property and a crime clearance rate considerably above average. Registered crimes numbered 9.1 per 1,000 people (vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people nationally), whereas cleared crimes reached 71% (vs. 48% nationally).

▦ Environment ●

Indicators in the category place the district last in the country. Low urbanization is the explanation for the exceptionally low connectivity of the population with sewerage: in 2015, 52.5% of it had access to public sewerage compared with 75.5% on average in the country and 7.6% had access to sewerage connected with wastewater treatment plants (vs. 62.3% nationally).

In 2015 the quantity of generated waste in the district rose to overtake the national average figures. Generated household waste per person in Silistra reached 458 kg annually vs. 422 kg nationally.

Silistra is still among the districts with relatively clean air: carbon dioxide emissions in the district are over 20 times lower than the national average relative to the territory.

▦ Culture ● ●

The intensity of cultural life in Silistra was relatively low, the only exception being the interest in local libraries which rose once again in 2016 to reach 1,663 visits per 1,000 people while the national average rate was 605 per 1,000 people.

Museum visits remained three times lower: 219 per 1,000 people compared with 734 nationally. The greatest difference was registered in cinema visits – 76 visits per 1,000 people in the district vs. 778 per 1,000 people nationally.

Interest in local theaters was also lower. In 2016, 225 visits per 1,000 people were registered while the national average rate was 322 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Silistra

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,621	5,410	5,618	5,852	5,933	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,589	3,337	3,249	3,289	3,521	3,922
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,059	6,390	6,880	7,215	7,494	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	18.7	17.8	20.2	19.8	20.4	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	57.3	60.7	61.4	64.7	63.1	62.8
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	50.1	50.9	48.2	50.0	49.2	52.2
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	12.5	16.0	21.3	22.4	21.8	16.9
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	15.4	15.8	15.1	14.4	16.4	18.5
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	32	33	33	33	35	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,259	1,442	1,511	1,436	2,244	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	65	111	287	275	256	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	40.0	56.5	37.6	60.2	56.4	55.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	40.0	39.0	44.8	46.7	46.8	53.1
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	14.2	14.2	14.2	14.2	16.2	16.2

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−7.7	−8.1	−6.8	−8.4	−9.0	−7.1
Net migration rate (‰)	−2.0	−2.4	−3.2	−3.4	−3.5	−4.3
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.27	4.13	4.13	4.15	3.88	3.80
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	4.52	5.14	3.96	3.55	8.97	13.93
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	81.6	81.5	80.1	78.7	78.7	76.6
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	86.8	85.6	84.9	86.0	87.6	87.4
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	165.0	181.5	202.4	204.8	208.6	217.4
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	9.3	8.7	8.3	8.0	9.6	9.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	62.1	60.3	62.4	62.1	62.0	70.8
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	7.7	7.8	6.4	12.4	5.4	10.8
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	0.6	0.6	0.6	6.2	7.6	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	23.9	17.5	13.1	14.7	15.0	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	10	0	0	69	115	76
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	131	145	192	188	188	225

Sliven District

►	Population (2016)	190,487
►	Area (sq. km)	3,544.1
►	Number of settlements	120
►	Share of urban population (%)	65.8

KOTEL

TVARDITSA

SLIVEN

NOVA ZAGORA

Overview

Sliven was the district with the lowest GDP per capita in 2015. Incomes shrank in the district once again in 2016. Increased economic activity in it was accompanied by a stable increase in employment and shrinking unemployment, though both indicators failed to reach national average levels. Sliven continues to be the district with the lowest investment activity. In 2016 the district once again had the highest share of road surfaces in good condition. On the whole, the average tax load in the district was comparable to the rest of the country. The development of administrative services is likely to lose its better ranking from the previous period. Sliven remains one of the districts with the most favorable population age structure but also with the worst education profile in the whole country. Administration of justice in the district can be characterized as fast and crime clearance rates are high. Sliven is still one of the districts with relatively low air pollution and small amounts of generated waste. Cultural life in the district is not particularly intensive except for the rate of theater visits.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Income and Living Conditions
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Labor Market
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Investment
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Infrastructure
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Taxes and Fees
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Administration
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Demography
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	●

Education
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Healthcare
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Security and Justice
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Environment
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Culture
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and Living Conditions

Sliven was the district with the lowest GDP per capita in 2015. It was also one of few districts where it shrank, though slightly (while it rose by 7% nationally) to reach 5,921 BGN/person with the national average level at 12,339 BGN/person. Incomes also shrank: in 2016, the average income per household member in Sliven was 3,685 BGN (vs. 5,167 BGN nationally).

That comes as an explanation for the considerably lower living standard in the district. Both the share of population living in material deprivation and that living below the national poverty line remained above the national average levels in 2015.

A positive tendency was noticeable in annual average gross salaries in the district. They went on growing, though staying considerably below average: 7,830 BGN compared with 10,535 BGN nationally in 2015.

Labor Market

Economic activity in the district grew considerably in 2016 for the second successive year but was still below national average. There was a positive trend of rising economic activity accompanied by a simultaneous rise in employment and drop in unemployment though neither indicator managed to reach the national average level. In 2016 the district's employment rate reached 58.9% while it was 63.4% in the country as a whole, while the unemployment rate dropped to 9.2% (vs. 7.7% nationally).

The district's labor market suffered from the unfavorable educational structure of the population. In 2016 the share of people aged 25–64 with primary or lower education rose to 20% (vs. 18% nationally) while the share of university graduates dropped to 21% (vs. 28% nationally).

Sliven has remained the district with the highest demographic replacement ratio. It went on rising in 2016 and reached its highest level since 2011 – 81.4%.

Investment

Sliven was still the district with the lowest investment activity in 2015. It was one of the districts with the lowest relative number of enterprises (36 per 1,000 people vs. 55 per 1,000 people nationally); it was also the district with the lowest FTA expenditures – 1,202 BGN/person vs. 2,973 BGN/person nationally. An outflow of FDI has been observed for the fourth year in a row; it reached a cumulative 474 euro/person as of the end of 2015 when the national average level was about 7 times higher: 3,250 euro/person.

Sliven went on being one of the districts with the lowest EU fund utilization. Sums from operational programs paid in the district reached 623 BGN/person as of 30th June 2017 when the national average was 1,344 BGN/person. The municipality of Tvarditsa utilized least funds in the district while that of the city of Sliven utilized most.

Infrastructure

The road and railroad density in the district was comparable to the national average rates in 2015 while the share of highways and first class roads (22.0%) was above the national average (18.6%). That fact also affected road quality. In 2016 the district of Sliven was once again the one with the highest share of road surfaces in good quality: 71.9% vs. 41.5% in the country as a whole.

Both Internet access and the share of people using it were considerably below average rates. In 2016 the share of users was almost half the national average.

Taxes and Fees

In 2017 Tvarditsa municipality raised some of the local taxes, whereas the municipality of Sliven lowered the property transfer tax. On the whole, the overall tax burden in the district was comparable to the national average level but there were some substantial differences in certain taxes. The average level of the tax on immovable property of legal entities in Sliven municipalities was considerably higher than its national counterpart. This was mainly due to the relatively high rates in the Sliven and Nova Zagora municipalities, which were raised in 2016. On the other hand, the annual license tax for retailers in the district was lower than the national average, being lowest in the Tvarditsa municipality. The average rate on taxi transport was lower in the district as well.

Administration

The development of administrative services in the district has been lagging and at risk of losing its better placement so far. Cadastral coverage remained at 23.0% in 2016 while it rose to 22.5% in the country. The transparency rating of local authorities in the district for 2017 dropped slightly from 65 to 62% but the national average rose from 49 to 59%. The best performer in the district was once again the city municipality of Sliven though it registered some deterioration compared with the previous year.

The administration's self-evaluation for the development of electronic government in the district remained close to national average and did not change significantly in 2017 but the evaluation for providing one-stop shop services dropped considerably, still lagging behind the national average level.

🏛 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

🏚 Demography ●●●●●

Sliven has remained the district with one of the most fa-vorable population age structures. The age dependency ratio as the ratio between people aged 65+ and those aged 0–14 was 105% in 2016 when the national average rate was 147%. Tendencies were also good in view of the consider-ably higher birth rate in the district. The natural growth rate in 2016 was –2.4‰ while it was –6.0‰ in the country as a whole. During the last few years, however, outmigration from the district increased and the same year the net mi-gration rate dropped to –5.0‰.

The share of urban population in Sliven district was below the national average. In 2016, 66% of the local population lived in towns (vs. 73.3% nationally). However, population density in the district remained considerably higher at 2,719 people/sq. km (vs. 1,548 people/sq. km nationally), which ranked Sliven second after the capital in this indicator.

📖 Education ●

Sliven is still the district where education is in the worst condition in all of Bulgaria. The number of dropouts from primary and secondary education continued to rise for the fourth year in a row to reach 5.3% in 2015 when the na-tional average rate was 2.9%. The share of repeaters also rose and in 2016 it was twice the national average.

At the same time, matriculation exam grades in the district improved and for the first time in a number of years, were slightly better than the national average grade. At the exam in BLL in 2017 students from the district got an average grade of 4.24 while the national average grade was 4.22. However, the share of poor grades also increased, though it remained below average for the third year in a row.

Sliven was also one of the districts with an acute shortage of teachers in 2016. Their number in primary and second-ary education was 65 per 1,000 students while the national average was 75 per 1,000 students.

➕ Healthcare ●●

The district has managed to attract GPs and their number rose from 108 in 2015 to 151 in 2016. This allowed Sliven to move its placement – from being in the group of districts with the greatest shortage to those with a relatively high number of doctors relative to the population. On the other hand, the shortage of specialist doctors continued in the district. In 2016 there were 818 people per specialist (vs. 530 per specialist nationally). The only districts with higher rates were Pernik and Dobrich.

The number of beds in local general hospitals was also be-low average: in 2016 it stayed at 4.5 beds per 1,000 people (vs. 5.1 per 1,000 people nationally). In 2016 a consider-able drop in infant mortality was registered in the district, though its rate remained above average.

⚖ Security and Justice ●●●●

Administration of justice in Sliven was characterized by relatively speedy justice once again in 2016 though judges' workloads were identical with the national average rate: lo-cal judges saw an average of 9.4 cases a month which was the exact national average rate. At the same time, the share of cases closed within 3 months rose to 96% (vs. 89% na-tionally), while pending cases remained below the national average rate.

Sliven was one of the districts with relatively few registered crimes and a considerably higher clearance rate in 2016. Registered crimes against the person and property were 11 per 1,000 people (vs. 13 per 1,000 people in the country) and cleared crimes reached 62% (vs. 48% in the country).

🌿 Environment ●●●●

The relatively low urbanization of the district accounted for the low connectivity of the population with sewerage: in 2015, 65% had access to public sewerage (vs. 76% was the national average) and 57% were connected with wastewa-ter treatment plants (vs. 62% nationally).

Sliven remained one of the districts with relatively low air pollution and small amounts of waste produced. In 2015, carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere remained two times lower than the average volume for the nation rel-ative to the territory while the volume of generated house-hold waste dropped to 311 kg/person annually (vs. 422 kg/person annually in the country).

🎭 Culture ●●

Cultural life was not particularly intensive in the district of Sliven. Only theaters attracted more interest in 2016 with 339 visits per 1,000 people compared to the national aver-age of 322 per 1,000 people nationally.

Cinema visits in the district (101 per 1,000 people) remained way below the national average rate of 778 per 1,000 peo-ple in 2016. Library visits were also considerably fewer: 293 per 1,000 people (vs. 605 per 1,000 people in the country). Local museums attracted 515 visits per 1,000 people while the national average rate was 734 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Sliven

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,621	5,994	5,689	5,961	5,921	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,605	3,226	3,014	4,017	4,236	3,685
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,191	6,589	6,999	7,265	7,830	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	40.8	35.4	32.7	38.0	38.7	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	64.6	64.5	61.7	60.7	62.9	64.8
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	53.7	51.8	51.8	52.4	55.9	58.9
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	16.6	19.4	15.9	13.6	10.9	9.2
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	18.7	18.7	20.5	22.5	21.8	21.4
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	35	35	35	35	36	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,491	1,636	1,132	1,152	1,202	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	2,561	548	500	480	474	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	36.5	37.0	41.1	49.8	44.6	54.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	82.0	82.0	79.3	80.3	72.4	71.9
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	23.0	23.0	23.0	23.0	23.0	23.0

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−2.0	−2.3	−2.2	−2.5	−2.7	−2.4
Net migration rate (‰)	−2.8	−4.5	−5.1	−4.1	−4.9	−5.0
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.51	4.17	4.15	4.19	4.18	4.15
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	4.45	6.49	7.01	9.01	5.95	6.94
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	75.5	73.6	74.4	75.0	75.2	76.4
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	86.1	85.0	84.4	85.6	87.4	87.5
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	148.2	218.4	220.6	153.8	217.1	221.8
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	14.2	14.4	12.6	12.5	11.6	11.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	42.4	41.6	45.6	47.8	51.8	62.4
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	7.2	7.0	9.3	13.7	5.2	6.7
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	57.7	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.4	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	78.5	198.0	161.0	161.0	161.0	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	36	20	152	93	84	101
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	273	310	357	350	314	339

Smolyan District

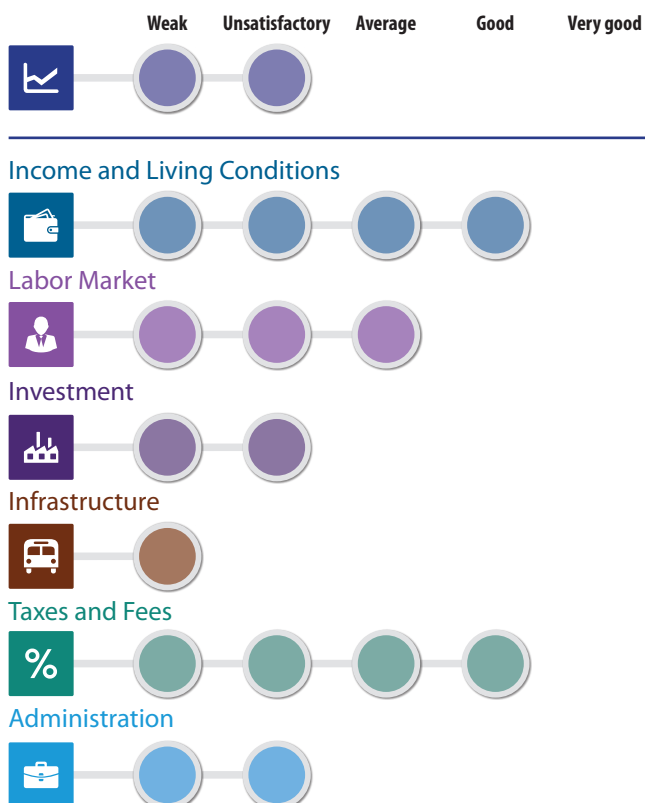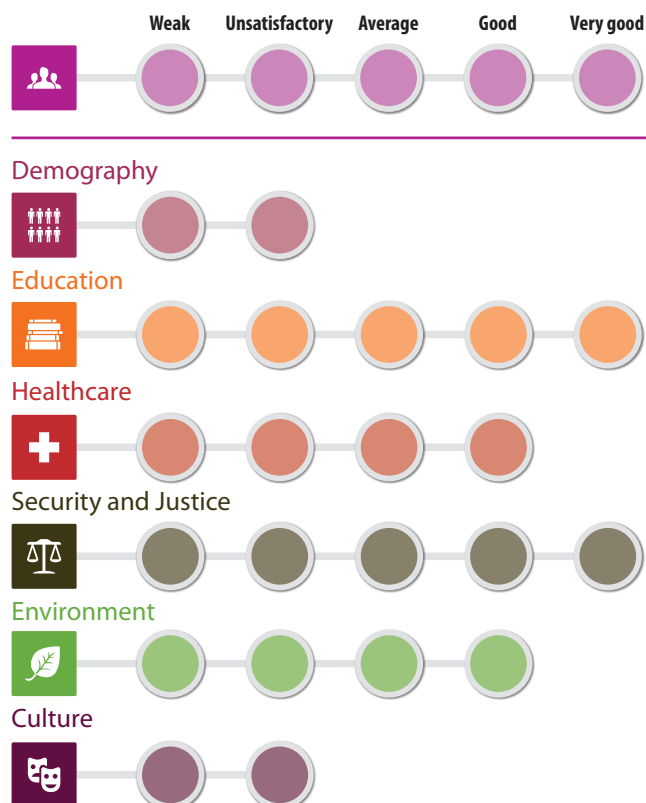|	
▶ Population (2016)	110,513
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,192.8
▶ Number of settlements	242
▶ Share of urban population (%)	55.7

Overview

After several years of hesitant growth in GDP, accompanied by shrinkages, in 2015 Smolyan district registered the second successive year of growth. Salaries also continued to grow but remained considerably below average. Smolyan reached the top three districts in population economic activity. Investment activity in the district remained relatively low. Because of the predominantly mountainous relief of the territory infrastructural development was limited. The main local taxes and fees in the municipalities of Smolyan were close to or lower than the respective national average levels.

In 2016, Smolyan was once again the district with the highest net number of people moving out relative to the population. It was the absolute first in education. The relative number of specialist doctors was lagging behind. Smolyan was the district with the smallest number of registered crimes and the highest clearance rate. Its relatively low urbanization accounts for the low share of population with access to sewerage. Cultural life in the district was not characterized by particular intensity. In 2016 the interest in libraries made an exception.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Income and Living Conditions

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good
●	●	●	●

Labor Market

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average
●	●	●

Investment

Weak	Unsatisfactory
●	●

Infrastructure

Weak
●

Taxes and Fees

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good
●	●	●	●

Administration

Weak	Unsatisfactory
●	●

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	●

Demography

Weak	Unsatisfactory
●	●

Education

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	●

Healthcare

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good
●	●	●	●

Security and Justice

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	●

Environment

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good
●	●	●	●

Culture

Weak	Unsatisfactory
●	●

📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

👛 Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

After several years of hesitant growth, accompanied by downturns, in 2015 the district of Smolyan registered a rise in GDP per capita for the second successive year, reaching 8,557 BGN (vs. 12,339 BGN nationally). Salaries also kept growing to reach 7,679 BGN though they remained lower than the national average of 10,535 BGN.

The stable upward trend in incomes was retained in 2016 as well, when incomes in the district (5,618 BGN/household member) remained above the national average level of 5,167 BGN/household member.

The rise in salaries and incomes in the district explains the improved living conditions in it. The share of population living in material deprivation as well as that living below the national poverty line declined considerably though they remained above national average levels in 2015.

👤 Labor Market ●●●

Economic activity in the district declined in 2016 and Smolyan lost its first place, though it remained one of the top three (after the capital and Shumen) districts with highest rates of labor market participation reaching 74.1% when the national average rate was 68.7%. The decline in economic activity, however, was accompanied by both declining unemployment and shrinking employment. Still, employment (63.6%) remained higher than the national average rate of 63.4%. Unemployment on its part (14.1%), despite the decline, was still almost twice the national rate of 7.7%.

University graduates in the district were 23.2% of the population aged 25–64 (vs. 27.7% nationally) and the people with primary or lower education were 18.9% (vs. 17.7% nationally).

The fast ageing of the population remained problematic for the labor market. In 2016 the district once again had the lowest ratio of demographic replacement: 43.9% (vs. 62.8% nationally). The implication is that for every 100 people aged 60–64 leaving the district's workforce there were only 44 people aged 15–19 about to join it.

🏭 Investment ●●

Investment activity in Smolyan district remained relatively low. Both enterprise numbers and investment in FTA rose in 2015 though remaining considerably below national average levels relative to the population. FDI was about four times lower than the national average level relative to the population. As of the end of 2015 it reached 83 m euro or 752 euro/person in the district (vs. 3,250 euro/person nationally).

Utilization of EU funds was also relatively low. As of 30th June 2017 the sums paid from operational programs to beneficiaries in the district amounted to 971 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person nationally). Most funds were utilized by the municipality of Rudozem (over 1,500 BGN/person).

🚌 Infrastructure ●

Infrastructural development of the territory is limited on account of its mountainous character. Smolyan is the district where there are neither railroads, nor highways or first class roads passing through. Still, the quality of road surfaces is better than the national average level. In 2016 the share of road surfaces in good condition was 55.5% in the district while it was 41.5% on average in the country.

Access to and usage of the Internet also remained below average. In 2016, 60% of households had Internet access (vs. 64% in the country) and the share of people who had used it in the previous 12 months remained at 56% (vs. 63% in the country).

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●

Most basic local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities were close to or lower than the national average levels in 2017. The most significant difference was registered in the annual license tax for retailers though the Devin municipality raised its rate. The municipalities of Devin, Madan and Nedelino, on the other hand, raised the tax on immovable property of legal entities and the average rate of this tax remained the only one above the national average level.

On the whole, 2017 witnessed the greatest number of rising tax rates by municipalities compared with previous five years.

💼 Administration ●●

The administration's self-evaluation for development of electronic government and provided one-stop shop services in 2017 remained below national average levels. The transparency rating of local administrations that year was also considerably lower: 47% (vs. 59% in the country). The lowest rating was that of the Rudozem municipality (under 30%) while the highest ratings were in the municipalities of Zlatograd and Dospat (over 70% each).

Cadastral map coverage in the district continued to be above average: 32.1% of the territory (vs. 22.5% nationally) but this was the fifth year in a row without any development. In the municipality of Nedelino no part of the territory has been included in cadastral the map yet.

♣ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

⚏ Demography ●●

In 2016 Smolyan was once again the district with the greatest number of people moving out relative to the population. The net migration rate was almost −12‰. The natural increase rate was also below the national average at −8‰ (vs. −6‰ nationally). The fact that these indicators retained low levels for years made Smolyan one of the fastest ageing districts in the country. In 2016 the ratio of age dependency as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 rose to 192% (vs. 147% nationally).

Smolyan continued to be one of the districts with a relatively small share of urban population: in 2016, 56% of its inhabitants lived in urban areas (vs. 73% in the country).

⚖ Security and Justice ●●●●●

This was the category where Smolyan registered its best performance in 2016. The district's indicators were better in both security and justice. The workloads of local judges were below average which resulted in relatively speedy justice. In 2016, 96% of criminal cases in the district were closed within 3 months (vs. 89% in the country) while the share of pending cases was 7.5% (vs. 8.3% nationally).

In 2016 Smolyan was the district with the smallest relative number of registered crimes and the highest crime clearance rate. Registered crimes against the person and property in the district were 5.6 per 1,000 people (vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people in the country). The share of cleared crimes rose to 74% (vs. 48% in the country).

▤ Education ●●●●●

The good condition of education in the district has traditionally ranked it among the leaders in the country but in this year's edition Smolyan is the absolute winner. In 2016 the number of repeaters was the lowest in the country: 0.08% (vs. 1.09% in the country). The lowest share was also registered in dropouts from primary and secondary education: 0.74% vs. 2.96% nationally. The same holds true of the relative number of teachers: 106 per 1,000 students (vs. 75 per 1,000 students nationally).

Smolyan was the district with the best performance at the matriculation exams in 2017, stealing the first place from the capital. The impressive development of the educational system in the district during the last few years is due to the purposeful efforts for acknowledging the significance of the educational community, teacher qualification, extramural activities, and individual approach. At the matriculation exam in BLL the students from the district achieved an average grade of 4.42 vs. the national average at 4.22. The share of poor grades, on the other hand, was 3% vs. 8% for the country.

⌇ Environment ●●●●

The relatively low urbanization in the district comes as an explanation of the relatively small share of population with access to sewerage. In 2015, 71% of it were connected to public sewerage (vs. 76% in the country) and 42% had sewerage connected with wastewater treatment plants (vs. 62% nationally).

Air pollution in the district remained almost 100 times lower than the national average level which ranked the district first in clean air – carbon dioxide emissions were 3.6 t/sq. km (vs. 324 t/sq. km nationally). The amount of generated household waste was also considerably below national average levels: 328 kg/person annually (vs. 422 kg/person nationally).

✚ Healthcare ●●●●

Smolyan continued to be one of the districts with the highest number of health-insured people: 95% while they were 88% for the country in 2016, the ageing population being an important factor in this high share. The relative number of GPs in the district was comparable with the national average but that of medical specialists remained below average. In 2016 there were 720 people per specialist (vs. 530 people per specialist in the country).

The number of beds in local hospitals increased further in 2016, almost reaching the national average rate. The infant mortality rate in the district rose but was still below average.

🎭 Culture ●●

Cultural life in Smolyan is not characterized by particular intensity. Interest in local libraries is an exception, probably due to the launching of a project for modernization and popularization of libraries in Bulgaria in three of the district's municipalities. Library visits rose from 194 to 1,344 per 1,000 people (vs. 605 per 1,000 people nationally).

In 2016, for the third successive year, the district registered visits to the working cinema in Smolyan but their relative number was still quite a few times lower than the national average: 150 per 1,000 people (vs. 778 per 1,000 people nationally).

Visits to local theaters and museums rose in 2016 but their number relative to the population remained over two times lower than the national average.

Key Indicators for the District of Smolyan

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,358	7,435	7,186	7,583	8,557	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,180	4,242	4,590	5,315	5,419	5,618
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,122	6,516	6,800	7,253	7,679	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	32.1	36.8	30.8	34.0	24.1	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.2	70.8	74.2	76.1	77.2	74.1
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	50.4	55.3	59.3	61.2	63.9	63.6
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	25.0	21.9	20.3	19.4	17.2	14.1
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	16.6	18.2	20.0	21.0	21.7	23.2
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	43	44	44	45	47	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,081	1,010	1,202	1,775	1,843	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	599	631	647	653	752	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	31.3	45.3	45.2	55.4	52.3	59.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	42.7	41.0	45.3	49.5	54.5	55.5
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−6.4	−6.7	−6.6	−7.8	−8.2	−8.0
Net migration rate (‰)	−5.4	−7.3	−14.7	−11.6	−12.9	−11.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.39	4.22	4.37	4.42	4.37	4.26
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	5.44	5.56	3.92	3.36	2.52	6.51
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	85.3	84.1	82.3	82.4	83.3	81.1
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	91.2	90.4	90.0	91.6	94.4	95.1
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	183.2	180.1	196.6	211.9	213.6	224.8
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	4.8	4.7	5.7	5.4	6.1	5.6
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	69.5	68.7	57.9	53.5	56.7	73.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	11.1	6.5	6.7	8.2	5.2	7.5
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	39.0	39.1	39.3	39.5	42.0	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	4.8	5.3	4.8	4.0	3.6	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	0	0	139	153	150
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	1	0	0	69	96	122

Sofia (Capital City)

▶ Population (2016)	1,321,721
▶ Area (sq. km)	1,348.9
▶ Number of settlements	38
▶ Share of urban population (%)	95.5

NOVI ISKAR

BUHOVO

BANKYA

SOFIA

Overview

Sofia (capital city) is the district with the highest income and living standard, the highest investment activity and the most favorable indicators of the labor market. The capital is situated close to several highways and the importance of the central rail station entails high density of the railroad network. The capital also has the highest Internet access and the highest share of population using it. It is still characterized by the highest local tax and fee burden, though that burden has not been raised during the last few years contrary to the general tendency in the country. Cadastral map coverage keeps increasing and is the highest in the country. The transparency of the local administration was evaluated as relatively high in 2017.

Sofia (capital city) is one of the few districts in which the population age structure has been improving if we take into account the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14. The capital is still the district with the highest rates of natural increase and net migration. High-school students from Sofia get the highest grades at matriculation exams but the ability of the educational system to enroll all children in the school system is below average. Access to medical establishments and specialists explains the traditionally high number of hospitalizations. In terms of security and justice the capital has performed worse than any other Bulgarian districts. The intensity of cultural life is the highest among all districts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
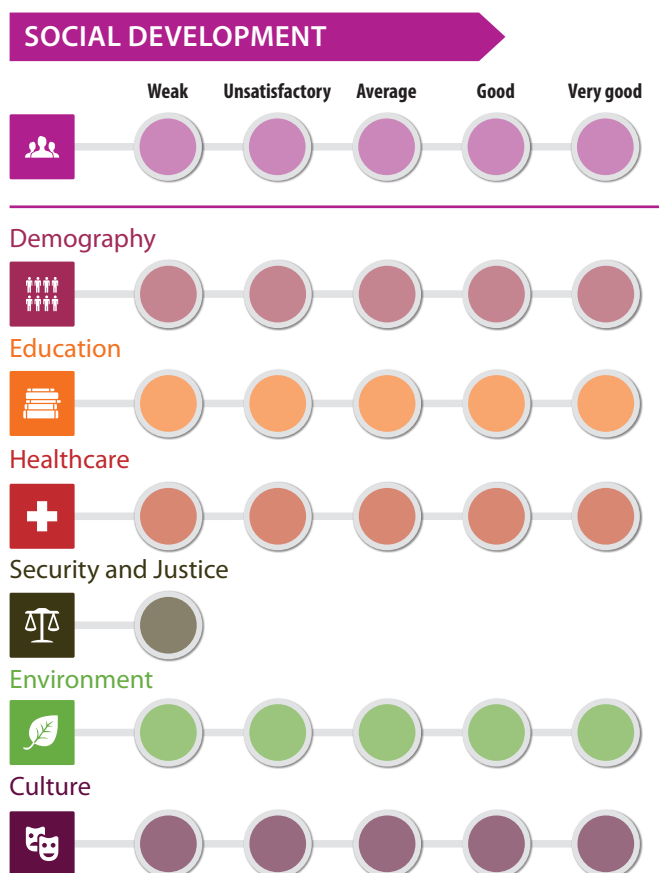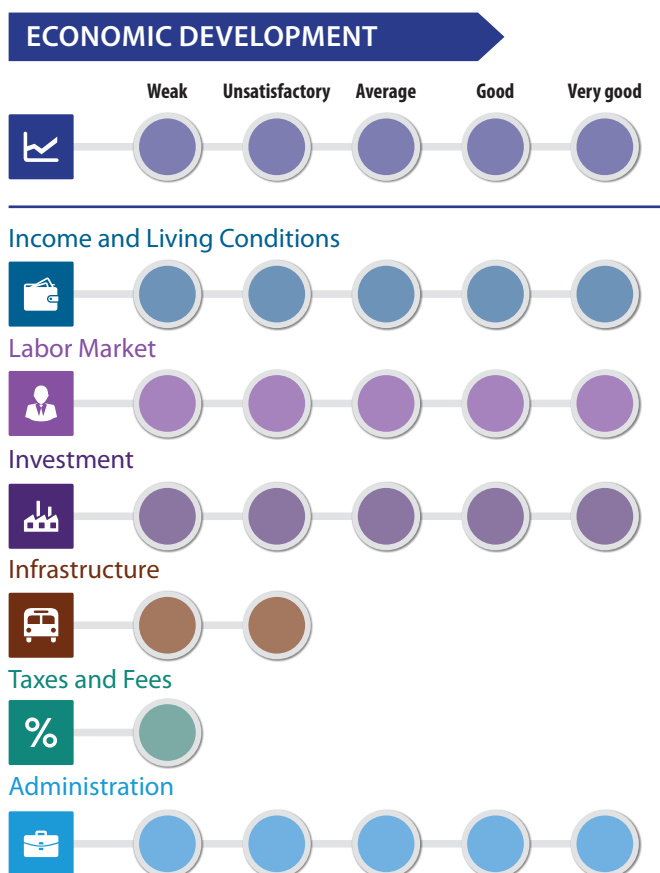
📉 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

💼 Income and Living Conditions ●●●●●

Sofia (capital city) is the district with the highest income and living standard. In 2015 GDP in the capital went into stable growth after several years of hesitant increase to reach 26,690 BGN/person or over twice the national average level of 12,339 BGN/person. Income and salaries in Sofia (capital city) have kept growing as well. The gross annual salary in the capital rose rapidly in 2015 to reach 14,531 BGN annually when the national average salary was 10,535 BGN.

The same year Sofia had the lowest shares of population living in material deprivation (19% vs. 32% nationally) and that living below the national poverty line (8% vs. 23% nationally).

🚍 Infrastructure ●●

Though there are no roads from the national road network on Sofia's territory, it borders directly on several highways: the "Hemus", "Trakiya", Struma" and the future "Kalotina" highway. The importance of the central railway station accounts for the considerably higher density of the railway network: 12.8 km per 100 sq. km (vs. 3.6 km per 100 sq. km in the country).

The capital is also the district with the highest access to the Internet and the highest share of people using it. In 2016 households with Internet access in Sofia were 69.4% (vs. 63.5% in the country) while the share of those who used it was 75.8% (vs. 62.5% nationally).

👤 Labor Market ●●●●●

The capital has the best indicators of the labor market. During the last few years, economic activity was growing fast in it to reach 75.4% in 2016, compared with the national average of 68.7%. Employment in Sofia (capital city) also grew to reach 72.5% (vs. 63.4% in the country) while unemployment declined to 3.9% (vs. 7.7% nationally).

The district's high employment and low unemployment are connected with the exceptionally favorable educational structure of the population. The share of people between 25 and 64 years of age with primary and lower education (3%) was six times lower in the capital than that in the country (18%) in 2016. The share of university graduates reached 51% (vs. 28% in the country).

🏭 Investment ●●●●●

Sofia was the district with the highest investment activity in 2015. The relative number of working enterprises reached 85 per 1,000 people (vs. 55 per 1,000 people in the country). At the same time investment in FTA (6,000 BGN/person) declined slightly but remained twice the national average rate of under 3,000 BGN/person. The difference in the relative amount of attracted FDI up to this moment was triple: 9,164 euro/person in the capital as of the end of 2015 vs. 3,250 euro/person nationally.

The capital kept its leading position in utilized EU funds thanks to several large-scale projects, such as the underground and Sofia Tech Park. As of 30th June 2017 sums paid from operational programs reached 2,509 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person in the country).

% Taxes and Fees ●

In 2017, the capital was still the district with the highest burden of the basic local taxes and fees. Nevertheless, contrary to the national tendency, the tax burden was not raised in the last few years which provided a stable and predictable tax environment. The most drastic difference from national average levels was in the annual license tax for retailers. In Sofia (capital city) it was 20 BGN/sq. m of sales space while the national average rates remained below 13 BGN/sq. m. The other more striking difference was in the size of the annual tax on taxi transport: 850 BGN in the capital vs. 525 BGN on average in the country. Yet, Sofia City municipality did not have the highest rate for this tax – in the municipality of Sozopol it was 1,000 BGN.

After some Bulgarian municipalities raised their tax on property transfer in 2017, the national average rate overtook that in the capital. The other tax with a rate slightly below the national average in the capital was the immovable property tax.

💼 Administration ●●●●●

Cadastral map coverage in the capital increased once again in 2016 to reach 98% when the national average rate was 23%. The local administration's self-evaluation for development of electronic government in 2017 remained unchanged and higher than average; that for offered one-stop shop services rose to a level above national average as well.

The local administration's transparency was also rated relatively high in 2017, though it declined compared with 2016, and reached 69% (vs. 59% nationally).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

Demography ●●●●●

Contrary to the general tendency of population ageing, one of the indicators for population age structure in the capital has been improving in recent years. Sofia was one of the three districts (alongside Pleven and Plovdiv) where the age dependency ratio as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 declined in 2016 to reach 120% (vs. 147% in the country). The capital was still the district with the highest natural growth despite its negative value (–1.5‰ vs. –6.0‰ in the country) and the highest net migration growth (4.4‰). It remained one of the few districts to attract people settling in it.

In 2016 once again Sofia (capital city) was the district with the highest share of urban population (96% vs. 73% in the country) and the highest population density of 4,973 people/sq. km (vs. 1,548 people/sq. km in the country).

Education ●●●●●

The capital's performance in this category was considerably above the national average level, the only district with a better rating being Smolyan. The net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade increased, though it remained below the national average rate in 2016. However, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education remained considerably below national average figures.

Students from the capital got the highest grades at matriculation exams. In 2017 the average grade at the exam in BLL was 4.61 (vs. 4.22 in the country) and the share of fail grades was four times lower (2% in Sofia vs. 8% in the country). The concentration of the largest universities and the numerous students in them also improved the capital's grade in this category despite the fact that in 2016 their number declined following the general trend in the country.

Healthcare ●●●●●

The concentration of some leading healthcare establishments in the capital has been a prerequisite for the ensured availability of doctors. There are 1,587 people per GP in the capital (vs. 1,611 people per GP in the country) and 389 people per specialist (vs. 530 nationally). The number of beds in general hospitals in the capital is slightly below average (4.8 beds per 1,000 people vs. 5.1 beds per 1,000 people nationally); however, many of the specialized hospitals are located in Sofia.

The access to healthcare establishments and specialists comes to account for the traditionally high number of hospitalizations in local general hospitals. The infant mortality rate remains much lower than the national average.

Security and Justice ●

The capital's performance in terms of security and justice has been the worst in the country. Judges' workloads remained the highest once again in 2016. A criminal judge at the Sofia City court saw an average of 14 cases a month (vs. 9 cases on average in the country). High workloads affected the speed of justice: the capital is the district where the fewest cases get closed within 3 months (79% vs. 89% nationally) and the share of pending cases is the highest (13% vs. 8% nationally).

The capital has remained among the districts with the highest relative number of registered crimes. In 2016 a decline was registered for the third year in a row, but the rate was still among the highest in the country. Apart from a high registered crime rate the capital is also characterized by exceptionally low clearance rates: 32% (vs. 48% nationally) in 2016.

Environment ●●●●●

Due to its high level of urbanization, the capital has the highest rate of population with public sewerage (96.1% while the national average was 75.5% in 2015). The entire sewerage network was serviced by wastewater treatment plants. That explains the capital's high rating in this category, though it is still among the districts with the highest generated waste and the most polluted air. Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere are three times higher than the national average and the amount of generated household waste keeps increasing to reach 480 kg/person annually compared with the national average of 422 kg/person.

Culture ●●●●●

The intensity of cultural life in the capital is the highest compared to other districts. In 2016 the relative number of cinema visits was almost three times higher than the national average rate (2,161 per 1,000 people vs. 778 per 1,000 people nationally) and that of library visits was over two times higher (1,241 per 1,000 people vs. 605 per 1,000 people nationally), both indicators maintaining high rates in the last few years.

Local theaters and museums also continued to attract audiences and interest increased in 2016 to reach 603 visits per 1,000 people (vs. 322 per 1,000 people in the country) and 821 per 1,000 people in museums (vs. 734 per 1,000 people in the country).

Key Indicators for the District of Sofia (Capital City)

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	24,726	24,608	24,642	24,890	26,690	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,438	6,403	7,441	6,890	7,061	7,349
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	11,249	12,059	12,851	13,542	14,531	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	7.3	5.7	7.3	7.4	8.0	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	71.6	72.2	73.5	74.0	75.0	75.4
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.2	66.9	67.5	69.2	71.7	72.5
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	6.1	7.3	8.2	6.3	4.3	3.9
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	42.7	42.9	45.8	48.6	49.6	51.4
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	78	79	81	83	85	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	6,554	6,143	5,468	6,234	6,052	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	8,953	9,009	9,245	8,891	9,164	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	67.0	66.2	70.9	69.3	75.3	69.4
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	60.7	95.8	95.8	95.8	96.3	97.9

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−1.1	−1.4	−1.5	−1.2	−1.7	−1.5
Net migration rate (‰)	4.8	5.4	7.1	6.5	4.2	4.4
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.60	4.32	4.55	4.60	4.63	4.58
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	1.62	3.66	2.19	1.89	1.79	2.07
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	79.0	78.4	76.0	74.8	74.5	75.4
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.5	86.8	85.2	85.9	87.1	86.2
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	139.9	238.1	223.6	152.5	253.1	257.5
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	20.3	18.7	20.5	20.2	18.6	16.6
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	36.1	38.1	32.9	33.1	30.4	32.2
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	12.1	12.8	10.6	14.4	15.4	13.0
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	95.5	95.4	96.1	96.1	96.1	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	1,239.0	1,205.3	1,073.5	1,073.5	1,073.5	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	2,099	1,813	2,000	2,061	2,126	2,161
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	614	600	641	649	547	603

Sofia District
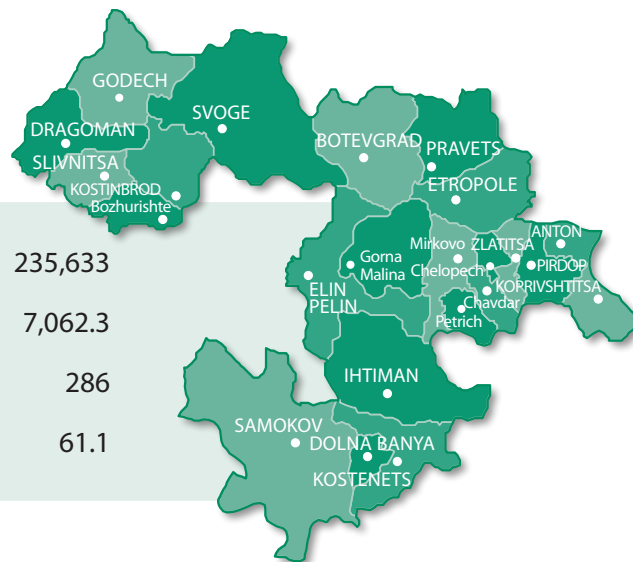
▶ Population (2016)	235,633
▶ Area (sq. km)	7,062.3
▶ Number of settlements	286
▶ Share of urban population (%)	61.1

Overview

In 2015 the district of Sofia registered a considerable increase in GDP per capita and rising salaries and incomes brought about improved living conditions. Further growth could be frustrated by declining economic activity and the population's unfavorable educational structure. Investment activity remains high in the district. The average tax load in Sofia municipalities is close to the national average level. Cadaster coverage is increasing but municipal authorities are lagging in transparency and service development.

Population ageing is noticeable all over the country but it is faster and deeper in the district. Sofia is still among the districts with the lowest results at matriculation exams. Hospital beds are a considerable number which determines the relatively big number of hospitalizations. Judges at the district court have high workload which affects the speed of justice administration. Due to the low urbanization and population density Sofia is one of the districts with limited access to public sewerage. The intensity of cultural life in the district is exceptionally low.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
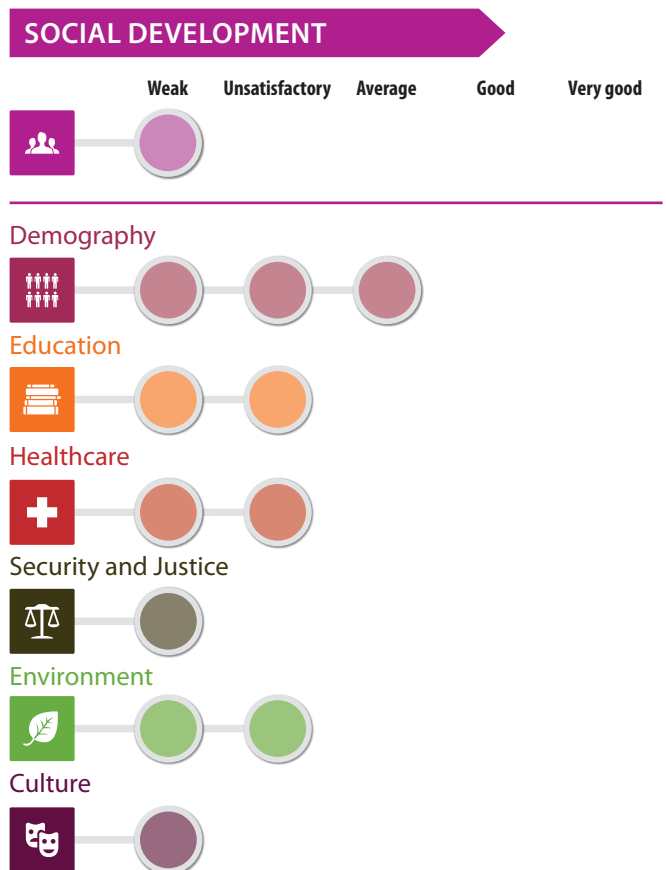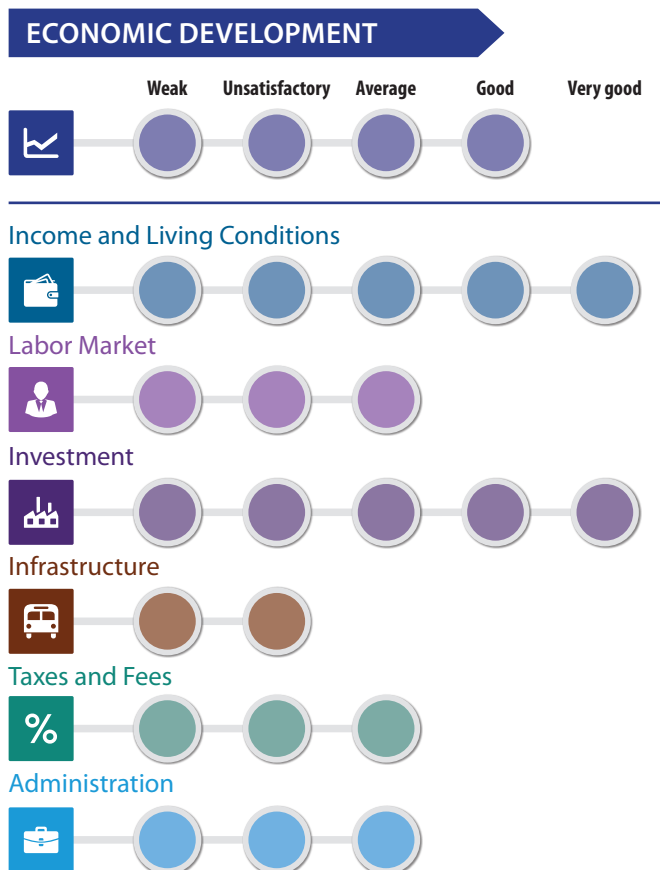
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●●●

In 2015 the district registered a considerable GDP per capita increase which placed it immediately after the capital, Stara Zagora, and Gabrovo in this category. The GDP growth rate was twice as fast as the national average rate and it overtook average values for the first time since 2012. The capital's proximity put pressure on salaries and they grew fast as well, approaching the average rate: 10,507 BGN while the average was 10,535 BGN. At the same time, household incomes were not able to reach the national average figure though they kept growing all the time between 2012 and 2016.

Rising salaries and incomes led to improved living conditions in the district. The share of population living in material deprivation declined to 38.5% (vs. 31.9% nationally) while that of the population living below the national poverty line declined to 23.1% (vs. 22.9% nationally) in 2015.

Labor Market ●●●

In 2016 economic activity was on the decline in the district and it lagged increasingly behind the national average rates with its 62.2% vs. the national rate of 68.7%. Declining activity led to simultaneous declines in both employment and unemployment in the district. The employment rate shrank by over 1 p.p. to 57.9%, while the national average rate was 63.4% and the unemployment rate shrank by almost 3 p.p. to 6.9% (vs. 7.7% nationally).

The low economic activity was probably a result of the local population's unfavorable educational structure which kept deteriorating. University graduates in the district dropped to less than 14% while the national average rate was 28%, and people with primary and lower education increased to 24% (vs. 18% on average in the country). That fact and the immediate proximity to the capital created natural obstacles before labor market development in the district.

Investment ●●●●●

The economic recovery in the district in recent years was mainly due to an increase in the number of working enterprises and FTA investment. In 2015 enterprises increased to 41 per 1,000 people (vs. 55 per 1,000 people in the country) while FTA expenditures grew by over 150 m BGN to reach 3,059 BGN/person, thus overtaking the national average rates of 2,973 BGN/person.

The relative FDI in the district remained considerably above the national average rate and stayed relatively stable between 2010 and 2015. Utilized EU funds were also more. As of 30th June 2017 sums paid from operational programs amounted to 1,588 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN for the country). The municipality with the highest sum of utilized funds was that of Kostinbrod and those with the least funds were Zlatitsa and Ihtiman.

Infrastructure ●●

Road and railroad density in the district is above average. The share of highways and first class roads is also higher though the share of roads in good condition remains relatively low: 36% vs. 42% in the country.

In 2016 the share of households with Internet access in the district increased albeit at a relatively slow pace. Sofia was the district with the lowest connectivity for the first time: 48% while the national average rate was 64%. The share of people using the Internet was also considerably lower: 48% vs. 63% in the country.

Taxes and Fees ●●●

The average tax load in Sofia district municipalities was close to the national average once again in 2017. The tax on immovable property for legal entities and the waste collection fee for such property were higher than average levels and so was the property transfer tax, whereas the vehicle tax, the annual license tax for retailers and that for taxi transport were lower.

There were four cases of raised rates in local taxes in 2017: the municipalities of Anton, Botevgrad and Samokov raised the tax on immovable property of legal entities and that of Svoge raised the vehicle tax. There was only one lowered rate: the municipality of Koprivshtitsa lowered the vehicle tax.

Administration ●●●

After the range of the cadastral map increased in ten of the district's municipalities the average coverage in it rose to 33.2% to go considerably above the average 22.5% in 2016. However, no part of the territory has been covered in the cadastral map in seven municipalities.

The active transparency rating of local administrations in the district was once again considerably below the national average in 2017. The lowest transparency rating was in the municipalities of Ihtiman and Etropole while the highest was in Chelopech and Samokov. The self-evaluations of the administration for development of electronic government and provided one-stop shop services were also below average once again in 2017.

🏛 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●

🏛 Demography ● ● ●

Population ageing is a characteristic of the entire country but it is faster and deeper in the district of Sofia. The age dependency ratio showing the ratio between people aged 65+ and those aged 0–14 reached 170% while the average national level was 147% in 2016. In the last three years the natural increase rate was below –9‰ in the district vs. the national average –6‰. The rate of net migration was also negative, though in 2015 there was a greater number of settlers in the district and this rate was one of few positive ones in the country.

The share of urban population in the district was relatively low. In 2016, 61% of local population lived in urban areas whereas the national average rate was 73%. Sofia was the district with the lowest population density: over two times lower than the national average figure.

📚 Education ● ●

The enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade in the district kept increasing to reach 80.4% while it was 78.2% nationally in 2016. The relative share of dropouts from primary and secondary education remained lower but close to the national average in 2015. The share of repeaters was still high 1.8% with the national average at 1.1%.

Sofia remained one of the districts with the lowest results at matriculation exams. The average grade at the exam in BLL was 4.03 while the national average was 4.22. The fail grades of local students were over 11% (vs. under 8% nationally).

The district's location close to the capital, where the largest Bulgarian universities are situated, posed a limitation on the opportunities for the development of higher education establishments in the area. In 2016 the number of university students in the district went on dropping following the general tendency in the country.

➕ Healthcare ● ●

Sofia remained one of the districts with greatest number of hospital beds which affected the relatively high number of hospitalizations. The relative number of beds in local general hospitals reached 5.5 per 1,000 people (vs. 5.1 nationally) and the hospitalizations reached 275 per 1,000 people (vs. 235 per 1,000 people in the country).

Yet, access to doctors continued to be slightly more limited than the average rate for the country. There were 1,774 people per GP (vs. 1,611 per GP nationally) and 548 people per specialist (vs. 530 in the country). The share of health-insured people also remained lower and even declined in 2016 to reach 86.9% (vs. 88.1% in the country).

⚖ Security and Justice ●

The district court of Sofia continued to have relatively high workloads which affected the speed of justice administration once again in 2016. A criminal judge at the Sofia District Court saw an average of 10.2 cases a month while the national average rate was 9.4 cases a month per judge. The cases closed within 3 months in the district declined to 85% (vs. 89% nationally) but the share of pending cases declined as well to 10% (vs. 8% nationally).

The relative number of registered crimes against the person and property in the district of Sofia was close to average (12.4 per 1,000 people vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people on average in the country) but clearance rates increased sharply and widened the difference from national average levels to reach 57% (vs. 48% nationally).

🌿 Environment ● ●

Because of its relatively low urbanization and population density Sofia was one of the districts that had relatively lower rates of access to public sewerage. The difference was particularly noticeable in the share of population with access to sewerage connected to wastewater treatment: 42% in the district vs. 62% in the country in 2015.

There was also a drop in generated waste but Sofia was once again among the districts with the greatest amount of household waste: 537 kg/person annually (vs. 422 kg/person annually in the country) in 2015.

The air continued to be relatively clean in the district. Carbon dioxide emissions were many times lower than the average level in the country.

🎭 Culture ●

The intensity of cultural life in the district was exceptionally low which can be explained by the capital's proximity and the cultural events offered there. In 2016 the annual average number of cinema visits in the district reached 70 per 1,000 people while the national average rate was over ten times higher (778 per 1,000 people) and visits to libraries reached 93 per 1,000 people (vs. 605 per 1,000 people nationally).

The only exception was the great interest in local museums in tourist locations like Koprivshtitsa in 2016. Cinema visits remained close to 1,500 per 1,000 people which was almost twice the national average rate.

Key Indicators for the District of Sofia

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,048	12,205	11,025	11,563	12,983	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,156	3,523	3,563	3,771	3,827	4,633
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	8,360	8,926	9,252	9,766	10,507	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	19.0	24.5	24.6	24.4	23.1	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.1	63.7	66.3	68.4	65.5	62.2
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	59.6	59.6	59.5	59.6	59.2	57.9
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	9.7	6.4	10.0	12.7	9.4	6.9
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	15.3	15.0	14.4	15.8	16.8	13.8
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	37	37	38	39	41	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,971	2,338	1,836	2,353	3,059	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	5,253	5,413	5,217	5,174	5,407	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	48.7	49.2	44.1	45.9	45.9	47.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	36.2	36.0	28.6	31.0	29.0	35.9
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	12.4	12.4	12.4	12.6	14.8	33.2

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−8.3	−8.5	−8.2	−9.1	−9.7	−9.4
Net migration rate (‰)	0.1	−1.2	−1.6	−2.7	5.5	−2.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.80	4.54	4.44	4.25	4.09	3.90
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	1.51	2.13	2.20	4.97	10.73	16.04
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	81.5	80.6	79.7	78.9	79.5	80.4
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	86.0	85.4	84.8	86.0	87.3	86.9
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	241.4	246.0	252.2	248.5	260.3	275.0
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	18.3	15.2	15.9	14.7	13.8	12.4
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	37.6	40.5	35.5	39.1	39.7	57.2
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	12.0	10.9	9.2	10.5	12.1	9.6
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	28.2	29.1	29.3	29.3	41.7	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	21.1	20.5	41.7	39.5	39.9	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	20	35	62	63	61	70
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	0	0	0	0	0	0

Stara Zagora District

- ▶ Population (2016) — 322,531
- ▶ Area (sq. km) — 5,151.1
- ▶ Number of settlements — 207
- ▶ Share of urban population (%) — 72.0

Map labels: GURKOVO, PAVEL BANYA, MAGLIZH, NIKOLAEVO, KAZANLAK, STARA ZAGORA, Bratya Daskalovi, RADNEVO, CHIRPAN, Opan, GALABOVO
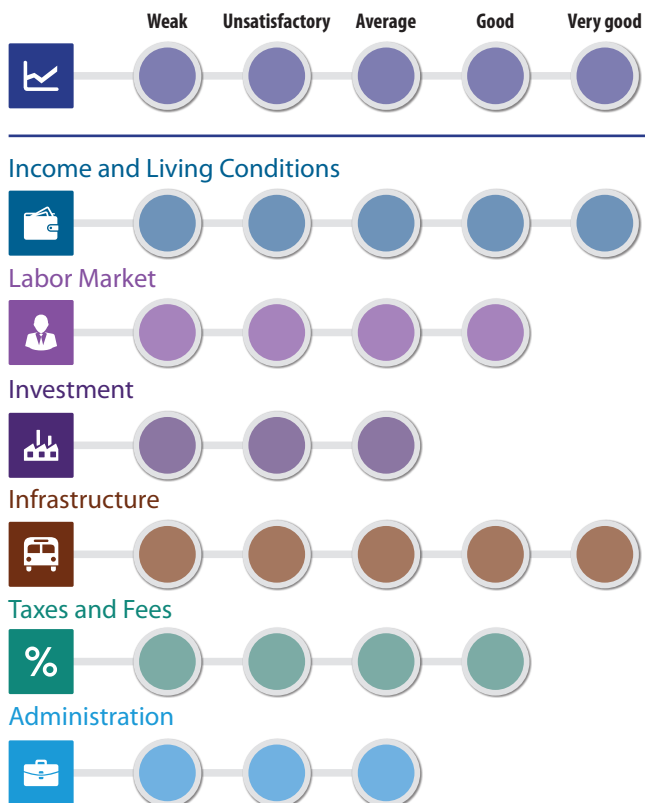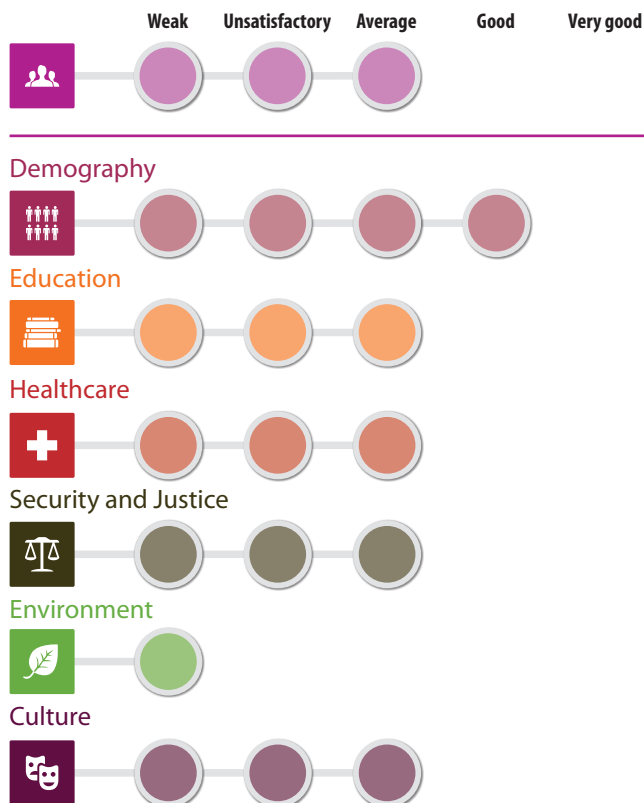
Overview

In 2015 GDP declined in the district (while it grew in the country) but kept its second place after the capital. Unemployment kept dropping to reach a level below the country average but the reason was mostly the population's lower economic activity. FDI continued growing in the district. The district's infrastructure got a high rating. The tax load is still relatively low. The development of e-services and one-stop shop services has made some progress though the administration's transparency is rated below national average.

Population ageing in the district has followed the general tendency in the country. Though Stara Zagora is one of the three districts where the shortage of teachers is most acute matriculation exam results are close to average. Considered against the background of the numerous doctors and hospital beds, hospitalizations are relatively few. Administration of justice is characterized by high workloads for judges and speedy trial. Air pollution in the district has continued to affect the district's environment rating. The intensity of cultural life is comparable with national average rates.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
Income and Living Conditions	●	●	●	●	●
Labor Market	●	●	●	●	●
Investment	●	●	●	●	
Infrastructure	●	●	●		
Taxes and Fees	●	●	●	●	●
Administration	●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
Demography	●	●	●		
Education	●	●	●	●	
Healthcare	●	●	●		
Security and Justice	●	●	●		
Environment	●	●			
Culture	●	●	●		

📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

💼 Income and Living Conditions ●●●●●

The district's GDP per capita dropped in 2015 while it was rising in the country. Still, it kept its second place after the capital with 13,555 BGN/person compared to 12,339 BGN/person nationally. Despite its decline, incomes and salaries continued to go up in the district to reach rates close to the national average. Interestingly, in 2016, for the first time since the crisis set on, the annual average income per household member (5,151 BGN) was, though slightly, below the national average rate of 5,167 BGN.

The share of population living in material deprivation remained relatively high (38% in 2015 compared with the national average of 32%) but that of people living below the national poverty line (21%) was below the national average of 23%.

👤 Labor Market ●●●●

In 2016 the population's economic activity shrank, following the downward trend in the country. This mainly affected the district's unemployment. The employment rate reached 61.1% which was still below the national average of 63.4% but the unemployment rate dropped at a quicker pace than the average rate to reach 6.0% in 2016 when the national average rate was 7.7%.

The district's clearly expressed industrial profile predetermined the relatively high share of people aged 25–64 with secondary education. They were 67% (vs. 55% in the country). The share of university graduates (18.6%) in the district continued to be below the national average of 27.7% but that of people with primary or lower education (14.9%) was also lower than the national average of 17.7%.

🏭 Investment ●●●

As of the end of 2015, foreign investment in the district continued to grow and its size relative to the population was close to the national average: 3,173 euro/person and 3,250 euro/person respectively. Stara Zagora was thus one of the five districts where FDI reached over 3,000 euro/person. However, annual FTA expenditures slightly shrank at the same time, and remained below the national average level in 2015. The number of working enterprises also remained below the relative average number: 46 per 1,000 people (vs. 55 per 1,000 people in the country) in 2015.

The district was lagging behind in EU fund utilization. As of 30th June 2017 the sums paid to beneficiaries in the district from operational programs amounted to 1,067 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person in the country).

🚌 Infrastructure ●●●●●

The infrastructure in the district earned a high rating. The fact that the "Trakiya" highway passes through the district entails its high share of highways and first class roads: 29% vs. 19% nationally as well as the relatively high road quality: 56% of road surfaces in the district were in good condition (vs. 42% on average in the country) in 2016.

The district was also characterized by a relatively high density of its railroad network. Both Internet access (67% of households in the district vs. 64% in the country) and its usage (69% of district inhabitants vs. 63% in the country) remained above average in 2016.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●

Unlike the relatively high rates of local taxes and fees in economically developed districts, the tax load in Stara Zagora continued to be relatively low in 2017. The average rates of the municipal taxes on vehicles and retail trade were slightly above national average levels but the taxes on immovable property, property transfers, and taxis as well as the waste collection fee remained lower.

There was only one local tax raised in the district in 2017 – the Gurkovo municipality raised its immovable property tax. There was one tax lowered, too – in the Opan municipality where the vehicle tax was lowered.

💼 Administration ●●●

Stara Zagora was one of the few districts where cadastral coverage did not increase in 2016. The cadastral map included 15.7% of the district's territory (vs. 22.5% nationally) while three of its municipalities still had no territory included in the cadastral map (Bratya Daskalovi, Opan, and Chirpan).

In 2017 once again self-evaluation of local administrations for development of electronic government and availability of one-stop shop services was still above average. The transparency rating of the administration, however, remained lower: 51% vs. 59% nationally. The municipalities rated as least transparent in the district were those of Opan and Galabovo (below 40%) while the most transparent municipality – and the single one in the district with a rating above average – was that of Radnevo with 65%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●●●

The ageing of the local population followed the general trend in the country. The age dependency ratio as the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 (149%) remained close to the national average (147%) in 2016. This was also the second successive year of increasing natural growth in the district – and though it remained below the national average, the gap was diminishing. The natural growth rate in the district reached –6.7‰ while the national rate was –6.0‰. At the same time, however, the number of people who moved out of the region in the last two years was greater than the people who moved in. Hence, the net migration rate dropped to –0.4‰.

The share of urban population reached 72% (vs. 73% in the country) and the population density reached 1,525 people/sq. km (vs. 1,548 people/sq. km nationally).

Education ●●●

The district's net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade stayed above the national average rate and in 2016 it rose to 81.5% while that in the country dropped to 78.2%. At the same time, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education in the district were still higher than the national average rates.

Stara Zagora was also one of the three districts (alongside Sliven and Yambol) with the most acute shortage of teachers in primary and secondary education. In 2016 there were 67 teachers per 1,000 students (vs. 75 per 1,000 students in the country) in the district.

In 2017, for the fifth year in a row, the high school students from the district got grades slightly below the national average at the matriculation exam in BLL. The district's average grade was 4.15 (vs. 4.22 nationally) while poor grades dropped to 8.29% (vs. 7.98% nationally).

Healthcare ●●●

Availability of doctors was above national average in Stara Zagora. There were 1,428 people per GP (vs. 1,611 in the country) and 491 people per specialist (vs. 530 nationally) in 2016. Following the national tendency, the number of hospital beds increased in Stara Zagora, and because the increase rate was above average, the relative number of beds overtook the national average number.

Despite the relatively high number of doctors and beds in general hospitals, hospitalizations were a relatively small number: 216 per 1,000 people (vs. 235 per 1,000 people nationally) in 2016. The probable reason was the district's closeness to Plovdiv where there were more specialists, hospitals and specialized medical services.

Security and Justice ●●●

Administration of justice in the district of Stara Zagora was characterized by relatively high judge workloads but also relatively speedy trial. In 2016 workloads rose to 12 cases a month per criminal judge at the district court (vs. 9 cases in the country). The share of cases closed within 3 months rose to 95% (vs. 89% nationally) and that of pending cases dropped to a level under 5% (vs. over 8% in the country).

Registered crimes against the person and property in the district were close to the national average rate: 12.1 per 1,000 people vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people in the country in 2016. Clearance rates, however, were above average: 56% compared to 48% nationally.

Environment ●

The main reason for the district's low rating in this category is the highly polluted air as a consequence of the emphatically industrial profile of the local economy, more specifically energy production. Carbon dioxide emissions in 2015 increased for the second year in a row by 19% to reach 4,384 t/sq. km or about 14 times higher than the national average level of 324 t/sq. km.

The local population's connectivity to public sewerage and wastewater treatment plants is also close to national average levels.

In 2015 there was a positive trend in generated waste relative to the population. The waste decreased for the second year in a row to a level considerably below the national average.

Culture ●●●

In 2016, once again, the intensity of cultural life in the district was comparable with that in the rest of the country. Visits to cinemas and libraries were below national average rates while those to theaters and museums were above them. It was the interest in local theaters and museums that registered the highest increase compared with 2015. Registered museum visits reached 947 per 1,000 people (vs. 734 per 1,000 people nationally) and theater visits reached 392 per 1,000 people (vs. 322 per 1,000 people nationally).

Key Indicators for the District of Stara Zagora

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,692	11,801	12,429	14,366	13,555	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,184	4,382	5,037	4,957	5,090	5,151
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	8,512	9,117	9,414	10,035	10,667	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	26.3	28.8	22.4	17.0	20.6	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.6	67.6	64.9	65.2	66.9	65.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	62.4	62.8	58.0	58.0	60.3	61.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	6.3	7.1	10.6	11.0	9.7	6.0
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	21.5	20.5	19.5	21.8	22.6	18.6
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	43	44	44	44	46	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,936	2,946	2,062	2,760	2,674	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,691	2,024	2,423	2,964	3,173	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	40.4	53.4	52.3	53.7	61.4	66.7
Share of roads in good condition (%)	59.3	59.0	53.4	53.7	55.7	55.7
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.7	15.7

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−5.5	−5.8	−5.8	−7.0	−6.9	−6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	−1.6	1.9	0.5	0.5	−0.2	−0.4
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.58	4.22	4.27	4.26	4.19	4.16
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	3.24	3.94	3.99	3.79	5.75	8.66
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	82.4	83.1	82.0	80.8	80.4	81.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	90.6	89.7	88.4	89.0	90.1	89.7
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	156.0	170.4	205.5	146.2	218.3	216.0
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	17.5	15.2	14.1	12.4	12.6	12.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	36.4	38.4	39.9	40.3	41.7	56.1
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.9	8.3	9.5	6.4	5.8	4.7
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	60.9	61.0	61.2	61.3	61.3	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	4,873.2	4,252.6	3,405.1	3,678.3	4,383.6	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	653	588	590	642	665	678
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	325	319	349	359	366	392

Targovishte District

▶ Population (2016)	114,453
▶ Area (sq. km)	2,558.5
▶ Number of settlements	199
▶ Share of urban population (%)	53.8

Map labels: OPAKA, POPOVO, TARGOVISHTE, ANTONOVO, OMURTAG

Overview

GDP per capita in the district of Targovishte grew by 10% in 2015, overtaking the average growth in the country. Incomes and salaries grew as well, which led to higher living standards in the district. The district's labor market suffered from the unfavorable educational structure of the population, though economic activity and employment increased in 2016. A considerable increase was registered in FTA investment in 2015. The local administrations' transparency rating was above the national average.

The relatively low natural increase and the high rate of out-migration continued to worsen the demographic picture in the district. The educational system has serious problems with keeping children in school as well as low matriculation exam grades. Targovishte is one of the districts with the acutest shortage of doctors. The court in Targovishte district has the lowest workloads in the country which positively affects the speed of justice administration. Targovishte is also among the districts with the fewest registered crimes and the highest clearance rate.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		
Income and Living Conditions	●	●			
Labor Market	●				
Investment	●	●	●	●	
Infrastructure	●	●			
Taxes and Fees	●	●	●	●	
Administration	●	●	●	●	

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	
Demography	●	●	●		
Education	●	●	●		
Healthcare	●				
Security and Justice	●	●	●	●	●
Environment	●	●	●		
Culture	●	●	●		
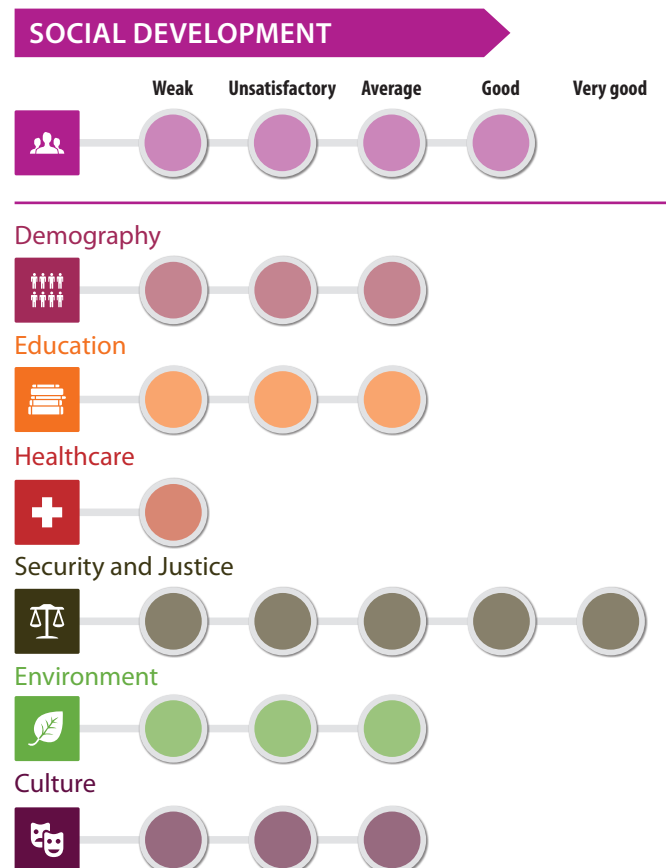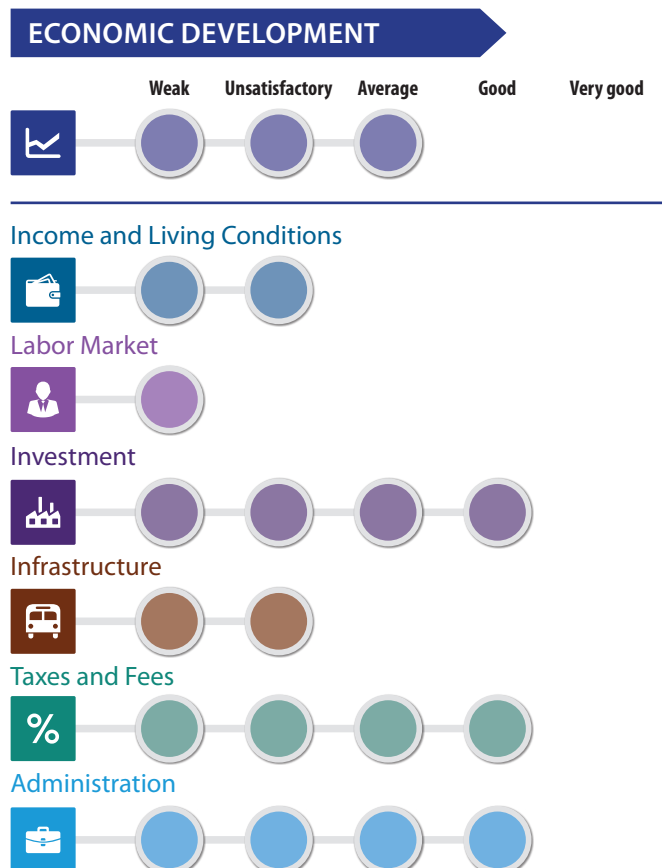
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●◐● ●

💼 Income and Living Conditions ● ●

After a decline in 2014, GDP per capita in Targovishte was once again on the rise at a rate faster than the national average: almost 10% (vs. 7% nationally). However, its value of 7,821 BGN was still considerably below the national average of 12,339 BGN. Incomes and salaries in the district also rose in 2015 but remained below the average rates. The gross annual salary reached 7,902 BGN while the national average was 10,535 BGN. Income per household member increased to 3,910 BGN (vs. 5,167 in the country). However, in 2016 income per capita dropped to 3,639 BGN because of lower incomes from salaries as well as those from self-employment and property. Targovishte remained one of few districts where salaries formed over half of household incomes: 49% (vs. 56% nationally). Another important part of income came from pensions: 35% (vs. 29% in the country).

The rising incomes and salaries led to a rise in living standards in the district. The share of local population living in material deprivation and that living below the national poverty line dropped to levels below the national average ones in 2015.

There was an increase in FDI as well. However, it was below the national average: 1,789 euro/person while the national average was 3,250 euro/person as of the end of 2015.

EU fund utilization also increased but remained considerably below the national average rate as of 30th June 2017. The greatest sums in the district were received in the municipality of Popovo.

🚌 Infrastructure ● ●

The density of the district's road network was higher than the national average but in 2015 once again the share of highways and first class roads (15%) was below the national average of 19%. Road surface quality increased, however, and remained above average: 48% of roads in the district were in good condition compared to 42% in the country.

In 2016 a rise in Internet access and usage was registered in the district but rates in both indicators were below national average.

👤 Labor Market ●

The labor market in Targovishte is poorly developed, though some positive tendencies can be observed. Economic activity remained relatively low but registered a considerable increase in 2016 to reach 59.1% (vs. 68.7% in the country). That led both to increased employment and increased unemployment due to the failure of some of the economically active people to find jobs. The employment rate rose to 53.6% (vs. 63.4% in the country) while the unemployment rate rose to 9.4% (vs. 7.7% nationally).

The population's educational structure between ages 25 and 64 was worsened considerably which worked as a natural stumbling block on the labor market. In 2016 the share of university graduates increased to 18% (vs. 28% nationally). Targovishte was the second district (after Razgrad) with the greatest number of people with primary and lower education – 36%, or twice the national average rate.

🏭 Investment ● ● ● ●

In 2015, the relative number of non-financial enterprises in the district increased to 34 per 1,000 people, though it remained considerably below the national average of 55 per 1,000 people. At the same time, an increase was registered in the district of FTA acquisition expenses by about 580 m BGN which was a record for Targovishte and made it the district with highest investment in FTA relative to the population in 2015.

% Taxes and Fees ● ● ● ●

Targovishte was one of few districts where municipalities did not change the rates of local taxes and fees in 2017. Thus the average tax load in the district stayed at a relatively low level. Only the vehicle tax was slightly above average. The tax on immovable property of legal entities and that on retail trade were considerably lower.

So was the tax on taxi transport. In all municipalities its annual rate was 300 BGN with the single exception of Opaka, where it was 350 BGN while the national average rate was 525 BGN.

💼 Administration ● ● ● ●

Traditionally the transparency rating of municipal administrations in the district was above the national average. In 2017 it reached 65% (vs. 59 nationally), the most transparent municipality in the district being that of Targovishte while the least transparent one was Opaka. Self-evaluations of the administration for the development of electronic government and provided one-stop shop services were close to the national average ones in 2017.

In 2016 the municipalities of Targovishte and Antonovo increased their cadastral map coverage considerably whereby the district reached 15% compared with the 6% in 2015. Still, coverage was way below the national average of 23%. Opaka municipality remained the only one with 0% coverage in the district.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Demography ●●●

The low natural increase and high outmigration continue to be a set-back in the district's demographic picture. In 2016 the natural increase rate continued its slow decline to reach −7.7‰ (vs. −6.0‰ in the country), while the net migration rate dropped to −5.6‰. During the last decade the age dependency ratio as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 increased faster than the national average ratio to reach 142% though it stayed below the national average of 147%.

Targovishte is one of the relatively poorly urbanized districts. In 2016, 54% of the local population lived in urban areas (vs. 73% in the country) while its density was 1,106 people/sq. km (vs. 1,548 people/sq. km in the country).

Security and Justice ●●●●●●

In 2016 criminal judges at the Targovishte district court once again had the lowest workload in the country which favorably affected the speed of justice administration. A judge saw an average of 3.3 cases a month (vs. an average of 9.4 cases in the country); 95% of cases were closed within 3 months (vs. 89% in the country) and the pending cases were 7% (vs. 8% nationally).

Targovishte was one of the districts with the lowest rate of registered crimes and the highest clearance rate in 2016. The registered crimes against the person and property in the district kept their rate of 9 per 1,000 people (vs. 13 per 1,000 people in the country) and their clearance rate rose to reach 68% (vs. 48% in the country).

Education ●●●

The share of population enrolled in 5th–8th grade in the district was identical to that in the country in 2016: 78%. The share of repeaters (0.7%) continued its stable decline for the second year in a row and remained below the national average rate of 1.1%. In 2015 the share of dropouts from primary and secondary education declined as well, though it was still relatively high.

Traditionally the average grade of students from the district at the matriculation exam in BLL has been below average. In 2017 it was 4.02 (vs. 4.22 in the country). At the same time those who failed the exam were relatively few: 5.5% vs. 8% nationally.

Targovishte is still one of the districts where no higher education institutions are located.

Environment ●●●

There were still relatively few people with access to sewerage and sewerage connection to wastewater treatment plants. In 2015, 56.6% of the district's population lived in areas with public sewerage (vs. 75.5% in the country) while 45.2% had access to sewerage connected with wastewater treatment plants (vs. 62.3% nationally).

Air pollution remained below average in the district, though it kept increasing for the fourth year in a row to reach 129 t/sq. km of harmful carbon dioxide emissions when the national average rate was 324 t/sq. km. New industrial enterprises launched in the district in recent years could be the cause of it. At the same time, the amount of generated household waste declined to 331 kg/person annually (vs. 422 kg/person in the country).

Healthcare ●

Targovishte remained one of the districts with the gravest doctor shortage. There were 2,274 people per GP (vs. 1,611 per GP in the country) and 753 people per specialist (vs. 530 per specialist in the country) in 2016.

The rest of the healthcare indicators in the district were once again comparable with national average rates in 2016. The share of people with health insurance in it kept increasing to reach 88.5% (vs. 88.1% in the country). Beds in general hospitals also increased in 2016 to reach the national average rate of 5.1 per 1,000 people. Hospitalizations on the other hand dropped for the third year in a row to reach 236 per 1,000 people (vs. 235 nationally).

Culture ●●●

Library visits in Targovishte were still considerably above the national average rate, reaching 1,122 per 1,000 people in 2016 (vs. 605 per 1,000 people nationally). Visits to local theaters also increased to a level above the national average: 454 per 1,000 people vs. 322 per 1,000 people nationally.

Interest in local cinemas and museums remained relatively low in 2016. Cinema visits amounted to 216 per 1,000 people (vs. 778 per 1,000 people nationally) and museum visits were 176 per 1,000 people (vs. 734 per 1,000 people nationally).

Key Indicators for the District of Targovishte

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,739	7,126	7,351	7,138	7,821	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,695	2,924	3,025	3,546	3,910	3,639
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,913	6,556	7,195	7,465	7,902	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	35.3	39.4	29.7	29.6	22.4	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	65.7	63.9	57.9	57.8	56.7	59.1
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	57.6	53.9	48.7	51.2	51.6	53.6
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	12.4	15.6	15.7	11.4	8.8	9.4
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	15.2	17.9	16.7	17.3	15.0	18.1
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	31	31	32	32	34	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,299	2,165	2,700	2,056	7,160	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,607	1,562	1,766	1,694	1,789	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	24.3	38.3	29.4	41.8	33.8	58.0
Share of roads in good condition (%)	54.2	58.0	52.0	47.0	42.5	47.6
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	14.5

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−5.7	−6.0	−5.8	−6.7	−7.0	−7.7
Net migration rate (‰)	−3.7	−3.1	−3.2	−4.4	−3.5	−5.6
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.04	4.00	4.10	3.99	4.06	3.98
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	8.70	7.58	4.53	6.87	4.44	7.21
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	86.0	84.3	82.2	81.6	77.5	78.2
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.9	86.9	85.8	86.9	88.2	88.5
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	234.6	241.7	257.3	250.8	244.0	236.0
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.3	9.6	10.0	9.1	8.8	9.0
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	69.2	70.5	63.0	64.0	63.2	67.9
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	6.1	8.7	9.6	10.3	8.1	7.2
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	44.1	44.1	44.1	44.1	45.2	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	69.4	88.7	92.5	104.5	128.5	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	26	25	36	9	259	210
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	364	373	480	506	434	454

Varna District

▸ Population (2016)	472,790
▸ Area (sq. km)	3,819.5
▸ Number of settlements	159
▸ Share of urban population (%)	83.6

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Aksakovo
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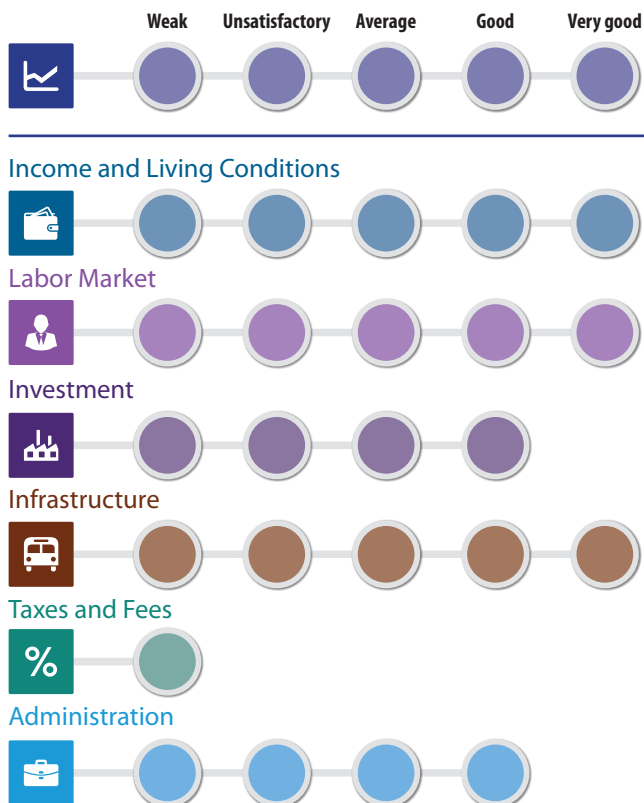BELOSLAV
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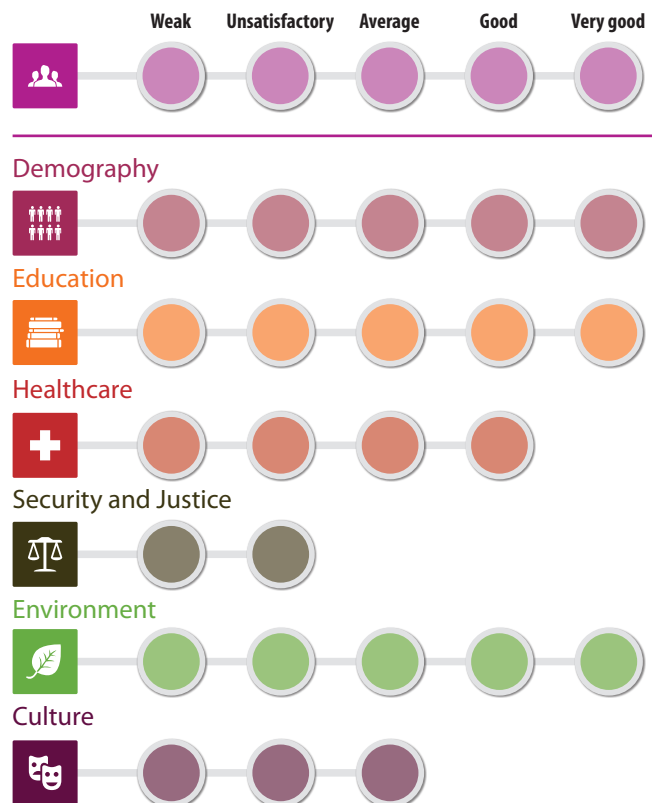DOLNI CHIFLIK
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Overview

The growth of GDP per capita in the district of Varna was lower in 2016 than the national average though in size it was above average values. Salaries in the district have also been on the rise. The main indicators concerning the labor market deteriorated in 2016, nevertheless Varna has been performing better than most districts. Investment activity in the district was relatively good. In terms of infrastructural indicator values the district ranked first in the country. The average rates of the monitored local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities gave Varna the second place after the capital for highest rates.

Though population ageing has been exasperating in the district, the process is slower and age dependency is considerably more favorable than elsewhere in the country. With the single exception of the capital district, Varna is the most highly urbanized district in the country, which entails both high connectivity with sewerage systems and relatively high air pollution. Some of the leading universities are located there and it ranks among the top districts in number of university students. Traditionally Varna has performed well in justice administration and poorly in security.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●●

GDP growth per capita in the district was below the national average rate in 2015, though its value of 12,589 BGN/person was above the national average of 12,339 BGN/person. Gross salaries in the country also increased to over 10,000 BGN annually, keeping Varna in the fifth place in 2015 as well. That also brought about income growth per household member that year. In 2016, however, incomes per household member dropped alongside a considerable drop in the size of salaries. Thus Varna went below the national average income for the first time since 2013.

The share of local population living below the national poverty line rose to 26.9% in 2015 while the national average was 22.9%.

Labor Market ●●●●●

In 2016 the main indicators on the labor market in the district deteriorated; still, the district went on performing well compared to other districts. Employment registered a drop after three years of growth but its rate stayed above the national average: 65.9% vs. 63.4% nationally. Unemployment rose after a three-year long drop but has also remained favorable compared to the national average figures: 7.1% (from 5.7% in 2015) vs. the national average of 7.7%. Economic activity in the district maintained relatively high levels, too, though it declined in 2016.

The population's (aged 25–64) educational structure in the district is similar to but slightly more favorable than the national average. There are 30% university graduates in the district (vs. 28% in the country). People with primary or lower education are 17% vs. 18% nationally.

Varna remains among the districts with the highest demographic replacement rate: the ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 is 68.6%.

Investment ●●●●

Investment activity in Varna has been relatively good. The number of non-financial enterprises kept growing all the time since the crisis to reach 69 per 1,000 people in 2015 (vs. 55 people per 1,000 nationally). FTA expenditure stayed close to 400 ml BGN but the cumulative FDI as of the end of that year registered additional growth to reach 3,725 euro/person vs. the national average of 3,250 euro/person in 2015.

EU fund utilization per capita remained below the national average. As of 30th June 2017, sums paid to beneficiaries in the district from EU operational programs amounted to 936 BGN/person while the national average was 1,344 BGN/person. The municipality which utilized most funds in the district was that of Byala with 4,509.6 BGN/person.

Infrastructure ●●●●●

Infrastructure indicator values place Varna first among the districts in the country. As an important transport hub, the density of its road and railroad networks is considerably higher than the national average. The district is one of the highest ranking ones in terms of the share of highways and first class roads in its road network: 27.4% in 2015 (vs. 18.6% nationally). That fact also determined the relatively good road surface quality in it.

In 2016 Varna had the highest share of households with Internet access – 73.8% vs. 63.5% nationally. It occupied the second place after the capital in the share of people who had used the Internet during the previous year – 73.2% vs. 62.6% nationally and 75.8% for the capital.

Taxes and Fees ●

The average rates of the main local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities placed Varna second after the capital for highest rates in 2017. Taxes in the district were above the national average; only the waste collection fee for non-residential property of legal entities was lower. Among the municipalities in the district, those of the city of Varna and Beloslav had generally higher tax rates. The Varna municipality also stood out as one of the municipalities with the highest tax rate on taxi services.

Administration ●●●●

Municipal administrations' evaluations for development of electronic government and availability of one-stop shop services in 2017 were relatively favorable in the district of Varna. The active transparency rating of local government in the district rose slightly but the much greater rise in the country as a whole left Varna below average rates.

In 2016 there was a serious increase in the share of territory covered by cadastral maps. From 17.5% in 2015, the district cadastral coverage in 2016 reached 36.8% vs. the national average of 22.5%. The reason was the rapid increase of cadastral map coverage in the municipalities of Vulchi dol and Suvorovo. The only municipalities left with 0% coverage are Vetrino and Provadiya.

⚶ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

⌗ Demography ●●●●●

Although population ageing in the district is exasperating, the process is relatively slow and age dependency is considerably more favorable compared with national average figures. In 2016, the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 was 121.8% (vs. 147.1% nationally), while its ratio to the population aged 15–64 was 27.4% (vs. 31.8% nationally). The natural growth rate remained almost twice higher than the national average, albeit with a negative value. In 2016 the district attracted migrants from other parts of the country and was one of four districts with a positive net migration rate.

The district of Varna is the second most urbanized district after the capital. The share of people living in towns reached 83.6% (vs. 73.3% nationally) in 2016. Population density was also higher than the national average.

▤ Education ●●●●●

In 2016 student enrolment in 5th–8th grade stayed below the national average again but the shares of repeaters and dropouts were comparable to average national figures, whereas matriculation exam results were considerably better than those in the other districts. The average grade at the exam in BLL in the district stayed high for another successive year and was the third highest in the country (after the capital and the district of Smolyan), while the share of poor grades was among the lowest in the country. In 2016, schools in the district managed to attract a great number of new teachers and the value of the indicator student – teacher ratio in primary and secondary education was higher than the national average.

Some of the leading universities are located in the district. Although the number of students dropped considerably relative to the population in 2016, the district of Varna was among the leaders in numbers of enrolled university students.

✚ Healthcare ●●●●

The availability of general practices to the local population was close to the national average: there were almost 1,600 people for every GP. Varna was also one of the districts with the greatest number of medical specialists – 427 people per specialist (vs. 530 per specialist nationally). At the same time the share of health-insured people in the district remained lower than the national average and even dropped in 2016 to 83.8% (vs. 88.1% nationally).

The number of beds in general hospitals as well as the number of hospitalizations dropped in 2016 to below average rates. The number of beds reached 3.9 per 1,000 people vs. the national average of 5.1, and hospitalizations

dropped to 172 per 1,000 people with the national average at 235 per 1,000 people.

⚖ Security and Justice ●●

Traditionally, the district of Varna has performed well in justice administration and poorly in security. In 2016 the share of criminal cases in the district court closed within 3 months stayed at 93% vs. the national average share of 89%. The share of pending cases dropped to less than 6% and was also below national average figures. An explanation for the relatively speedy justice administration can be sought in the small workloads of local judges. A criminal judge in the district of Varna saw an average of 7 cases a month while the country average workload was over 9 cases a month

Crimes against the person and property registered in the district dropped for the third successive year but the rate was still above the national average number: 14.8 per 1,000 people in the district and 12.6 per 1,000 people in the country as whole. The crime clearance rates rose to 39% in 2016 though still lagging behind the national average of 48%.

✿ Environment ●●●●●

Strongly urbanized areas in the district determine the high share of population in areas with public sewerage systems (86.3% vs. 75.5% nationally). Connectivity with wastewater treatment plants was also very good: 86.3% vs. 62.3% nationally in 2015.

On the other hand, Varna remained one of the districts with the most polluted air. Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere dropped but stayed way above average: 750.1 t/sq. km (vs. 323.8 t/sq. km nationally). Generated household waste also dropped, but in 2015 it was still above average: 472 kg/person vs. 422 kg/person nationally.

⧖ Culture ●●●

The high interest in cinemas and theaters was retained in the district in 2016. Cinema visits rose to 1,281 per 1,000 people (vs. 778 per 1,000 people nationally) and those to theaters went up to 363 per 1,000 people (vs. 322 nationally).

In 2016 museum visits also rose in the district though they stayed below average: 490 per 1,000 people (vs. 743 per 1,000 people nationally). Libraries in the district have been attracting fewer and fewer readers. Library visits dropped to 269 per 1,000 people in 2016 with the national average being 605 per 1,000.

Key Indicators for the District of Varna

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,006	11,468	11,272	12,113	12,589	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,739	4,306	4,912	5,008	5,168	5,117
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	8,144	8,562	8,922	9,272	10,000	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	20.1	23.1	21.9	22.6	26.9	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	63.1	64.8	67.0	67.8	72.6	70.9
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	56.6	54.1	57.8	61.8	68.4	65.9
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	10.3	16.4	13.7	8.7	5.7	7.1
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	25.4	26.0	31.4	33.8	30.6	29.9
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	65	66	66	67	69	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	2,299	2,137	2,385	2,323	2,094	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	3,162	3,105	3,006	3,543	3,725	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	40.1	51.3	57.1	58.9	57.8	73.8
Share of roads in good condition (%)	36.7	39.0	42.6	43.5	44.4	44.5
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	11.1	11.1	11.4	11.9	17.5	36.8

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−1.5	−2.1	−2.4	−2.7	−3.5	−3.3
Net migration rate (‰)	0.5	−0.2	3.8	2.1	1.6	2.8
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.50	4.22	4.38	4.30	4.37	4.38
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	3.53	5.07	4.73	5.09	5.21	5.39
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	80.5	78.9	76.9	73.5	75.5	74.8
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	85.2	84.4	83.2	83.8	85.1	83.8
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	155.2	170.2	177.7	169.8	174.7	172.0
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	17.6	18.4	18.5	17.5	15.9	14.8
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	27.0	26.8	27.0	25.8	30.4	38.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	5.7	5.8	8.3	11.3	7.2	5.9
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	85.1	86.1	86.2	86.2	86.3	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	1,742.6	1,284.1	974.3	1,106.3	750.1	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	1,159	1,108	1,157	1,193	1,185	1,281
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	171	179	218	234	283	363

Veliko Tarnovo District

▶ Population (2016)	243,633
▶ Area (sq. km)	4,661.6
▶ Number of settlements	337
▶ Share of urban population (%)	70.1

Overview

GDP per capita as well as the gross annual average salary in the district grew at rates close to the national average ones but their values stayed considerably lower. The reason for the relatively high employment and the low unemployment in the district can be sought in the relatively good educational structure of the population. The district has been lagging considerably behind national average figures in the indicators for entrepreneurship and investment. The average rates of local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities place Veliko Tarnovo among the districts with the highest rates.

The district's demographic picture has undergone serious deterioration. Indicators on the state of education have placed the district in the third position after the capital and the district of Smolyan. On the other hand, the state of healthcare in the district is among the worst. Veliko Tarnovo is one of the districts with the highest clearance crime rate, though the speedy administration of justice is below the national average. The wealth of historical heritage sites has placed Veliko Tarnovo among the districts with the richest cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
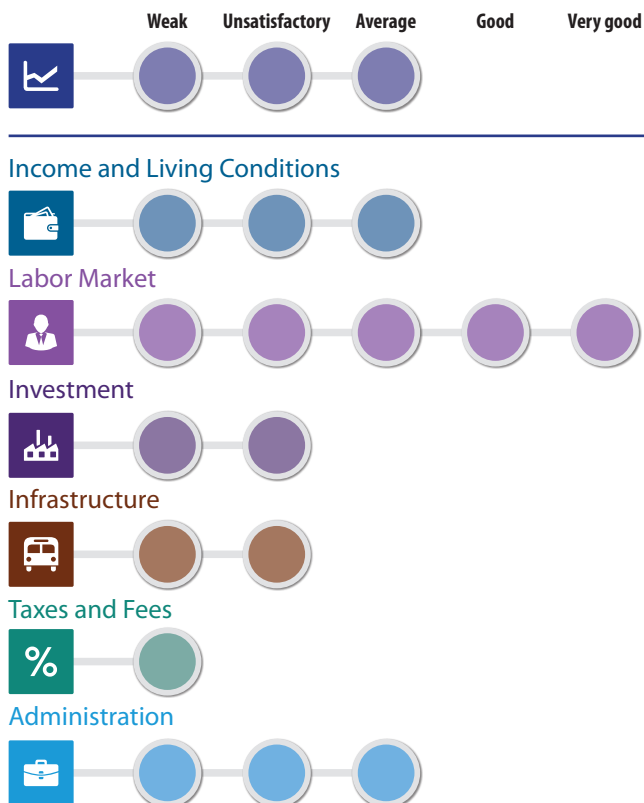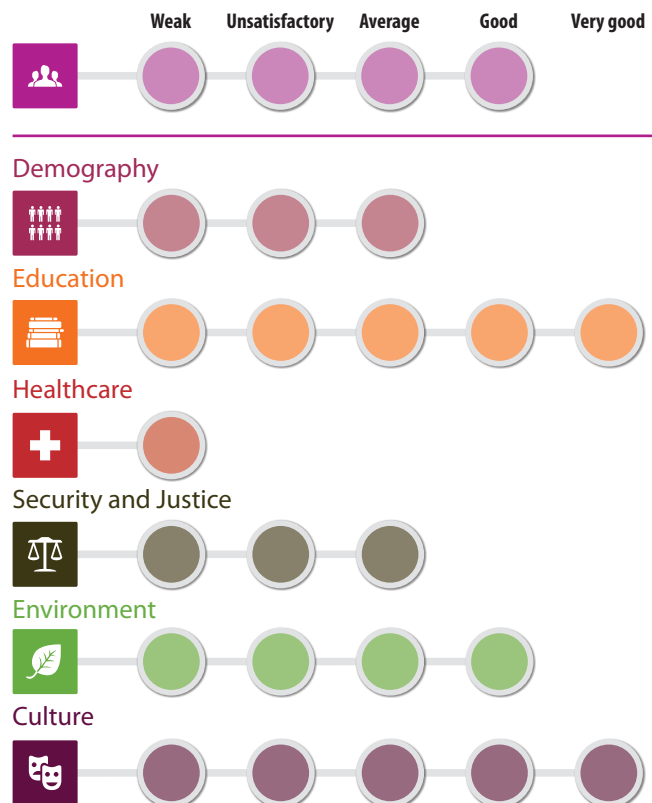
⬀ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

💳 Income and Living Conditions ●●●

Both GDP per capita and the annual average salary in the district of Veliko Tarnovo grew at rates similar to national average ones in 2015 compared to 2014 though their values were considerably lower. GDP per capita reached 8,288 BGN (vs. 12,339 BGN nationally), and the average annual gross salary rose to 8,213 BGN (vs. 10,535 BGN nationally).

Household incomes rose abruptly in 2016 and the gap from the national average levels shrank considerably. Still, average income per household member in the district stayed below national average figures: 4,967 BGN vs. 5,167 BGN nationally.

The share of people living in material deprivation as well as that of people below the national poverty line retained relatively high levels.

👤 Labor Market ●●●●●

In 2016, the economic activity in the country dropped after having been on the rise for several years in succession but the upward trend continued in the district of Veliko Tarnovo and it overtook most other districts. That brought about a rise in unemployment in the district (7.6%), though it remained close to the national average level of 7.7%. Employment retained its level of 65.0%, while staying above the average 63.4%.

The relatively high employment and low unemployment rates might be rooted in the good educational structure of the district's population. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 grew and was comparable to the average values in the country, while that of people with primary or lower education shrank to 14.3% vs. the national average of 17.7% in 2016.

The ageing population remained problematic for the labor market. The demographic replacement ratio as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 56.2% while the national average was 62.8%, the implication being that for every 100 people about to leave the labor market in the coming years there are 56 youngsters to take their place.

⛏ Investment ●●

The district has been lagging considerably behind national average figures in the indicators for entrepreneurship and investment. In 2015, the number of enterprises once again rose at slower rates than the ones in the country to reach 43 per 1,000 people in the district vs. 55 per 1,000 people nationally. The FTA acquisition expenditures rose considerably relative to the population in 2015 but remained at about 1/3 of the national average values. Foreign investment on the other hand was over 6 times lower: 500 euro/

person cumulative as of the end of 2015 (vs. 3,250 euro/person nationally).

The district was also lagging in EU fund utilization. As of 30th June 2017 beneficiaries from operational funds in the district were paid 1,157 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN nationally). The municipalities that utilized the most funds were Svishtov and Veliko Tarnovo, whereas Suhindol and Polski Trumbesh utilized least funds. The latter two were among the ten municipalities in Bulgaria that utilized less than 100 BGN/person.

🚆 Infrastructure ●●

Road and railroad network density is higher in the district than the national average but the share of highways and first class roads has been lagging behind: in 2016, it was 16.3% while the national average was 18.6%. That is one of the possible explanations of the low share of roads in good condition: 25.4% vs. the national average of 41.5%.

Both household access to the Internet and the share of people who have used the Internet in the last 12 months registered a small drop compared to 2015. Yet its levels were still comparable to national average figures.

% Taxes and Fees ●

The average rates of local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities place the district fourth in the country with highest rates after the capital, Varna, and Burgas. All monitored local taxes and fees in the district have higher average levels than the average rates in the country except for the annual license tax for retailers and the taxi transportation tax. Veliko Tarnovo is one of the districts with the highest tax rates on vehicles from 74 to 110 kW and the highest rate of the tax on immovable property of legal entities.

What is more, in 2017 a number of municipalities in the district raised the rates of local taxes and fees.

💼 Administration ●●●

In 2017 Veliko Tarnovo was once again among the districts with relatively high transparency of local government institutions. The administration's rating for the development of electronic government in the district's municipalities also rose and stayed above the national average but one-stop shop services lagged behind.

Cadastral map coverage in the district remained twice lower than the national average: 11% compared to 23% nationally. Only the municipality of Zlataritsa had full coverage while the municipalities of Lyaskovets and Strazhitsa continued to have 0% coverage. The only improvement in 2016 compared to 2015 was registered in the municipality of the city of Veliko Tarnovo.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ● ● ●

Demography ● ● ●

The district's demographic picture has seriously deteriorated. The age dependency ratio as a ratio between the population aged 65+ and that aged 0–14 rose in 2016 to 180% while the national average was 147%. The natural growth rate had a slight rise in 2016, though it retained its relatively low value of –8‰ vs. the national average of –6‰. The net migration rate also remained negative.

A comparatively small share of the district's population lives in towns: 70.1% (vs. 73.3% nationally), which explains the lower population density of 1,093 people/sq. km (compared to the national average figure of 1,543 people/sq. km).

Education ● ● ● ● ●

The indicators measuring the state of education in the district place Veliko Tarnovo third in the country – after the capital and the district of Smolyan. In 2016 again, the district was the leader in number of university students relative to the population (90 per 1,000 people) though the number of students has been going down for another successive year – a tendency characteristic of the entire country.

The district's enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade fell, but remained close to the national average. The number of dropouts from primary and secondary education also dropped. In 2016 the district succeeded in attracting a considerable number of teachers in primary and secondary education and their number reached 85 per 1,000 students while it was 75 per 1,000 nationally. The average grade at the matriculation exam in BLL for high school graduates in the district rose to a level commensurate with the national average grade in 2017.

Healthcare ●

Healthcare indicators rank the district of Veliko Tarnovo among the worst performers – only Yambol and Targovishte are behind it.

Veliko Tarnovo is among the districts with the worst shortage of doctors. One GP takes care of 1,743 people (vs. 1,611 on average in the country). In 2016 one specialist was responsible for 704 people (vs. 530 nationally). In addition, the share of health-insured people was still one of the lowest in the country: 84% vs. the national average of 88%.

The relative share of hospital beds and that of hospitalizations in the district were also relatively low. There were 3.1 beds in general hospitals per 1,000 population (vs. 5.1 per 1,000 people nationally) and hospitalizations were 155 per 1,000 people (vs. 235 per 1,000 nationally) in 2016.

Security and Justice ● ● ●

Though the workloads of criminal judges at the district court were considerably lower than they were in the country as a whole, namely, one judge saw 7 cases a month on average while the national average figure was 9 cases a month, the speed of justice administration was below the national average. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months remained 91% in Veliko Tarnovo while it was 89% in the country but the share of pending cases rose to 10% (vs. 8% nationally).

Veliko Tarnovo was among the districts with the highest crime clearance rate in 2016. From all the registered crimes over 65% were cleared (vs. 48% nationally). The registered crime rate remained below average: 11.1 crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people (vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people nationally).

Environment ● ● ● ●

Air pollution dropped dramatically in 2015 to reach 46.6 t/sq. km carbon dioxide emissions, considerably below the national average of 323.8 t/sq. km. Generated household waste also stayed below average.

The district's relatively low urbanization explains the lower availability of sewerage systems to the population. Still, this indicator, as well as the connectivity to wastewater treatment plants increased in 2015 to approach national average rates.

Culture ● ● ● ● ●

The rich historical and cultural heritage in the district ranked it second after Gabrovo in visits to the local museums with 1,945 visits per 1,000 people (vs. 734 per 1,000 nationally) in 2016. The district ranks a decisive first in library visits. With 2,277 visits per 1,000 people it marks a huge difference from the national average of 605 per 1,000 people – almost four times more.

In 2016, theater visits in the district increased to reach 125 per 1,000 people but remained below the national average of 322 per 1,000 people. Cinema visits in the district were 338 per 1,000 people or almost half the national average in 2016.

Key Indicators for the District of Veliko Tarnovo

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,145	7,415	7,802	7,832	8,288	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,648	4,043	4,385	4,288	4,180	4,967
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,488	6,742	7,262	7,662	8,213	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	24.5	18.5	30.2	24.4	30.8	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	61.6	63.9	65.5	68.1	69.8	70.3
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	54.3	55.0	54.8	60.0	65.0	65.0
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	11.7	13.8	16.2	11.7	6.8	7.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	21.5	23.5	26.6	27.3	26.9	27.3
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	39	40	40	41	43	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,516	1,482	1,576	1,541	2,056	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	284	331	355	434	500	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	45.0	41.0	46.6	55.0	60.7	56.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	30.2	23.6	25.7	27.7	26.7	25.4
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.7	10.4	11.0

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−7.9	−7.9	−6.9	−8.2	−8.2	−8.0
Net migration rate (‰)	−2.0	−3.0	−2.7	−5.2	−3.1	−3.3
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.38	4.19	4.27	4.24	4.24	4.10
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	5.62	6.16	6.61	5.46	6.20	8.56
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	82.3	81.4	80.6	78.7	78.2	77.7
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	84.2	83.3	82.2	83.1	84.5	84.2
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	138.9	142.2	146.9	149.4	146.4	155.2
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	14.2	13.2	11.8	10.7	11.4	11.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	58.4	62.5	61.6	60.1	57.5	65.4
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.4	8.6	7.4	8.0	9.5	10.0
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	43.9	44.2	44.5	44.8	61.7	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	157.2	119.2	148.6	131.1	46.6	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	376	340	396	471	444	338
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	67	102	123	122	71	125

Vidin District

▸ Population (2016)	90,051
▸ Area (sq. km)	3,032.9
▸ Number of settlements	143
▸ Share of urban population (%)	64.0

Overview

Vidin is one of the districts with the lowest GDP per capita and the district with lowest salaries. These indicators predetermine the relatively high share of people living in material deprivation and those living in poverty – the poor make up almost half of its population. On the labor market the tendency for increasing employment in recent years was reversed in 2016, whereas unemployment rates remained almost twice the national average. Investment activity in the district also stayed relatively low, albeit with some improvement. The average rates of the monitored local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities place Vidin among the districts with the lowest tax burden. Vidin has confirmed its position as the district with the smallest number of inhabitants; it ranks second in the country in terms of rapidly ageing population. Education in the district has shown some positive tendencies. The shortage of GPs and specialist doctors and the limited availability of hospital beds entail a small number of hospitalizations. Clearance rates in the district are going up while the relatively low workloads of criminal judges facilitate a speedier administration of justice. Theaters and museums still attract a considerable number of visitors.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
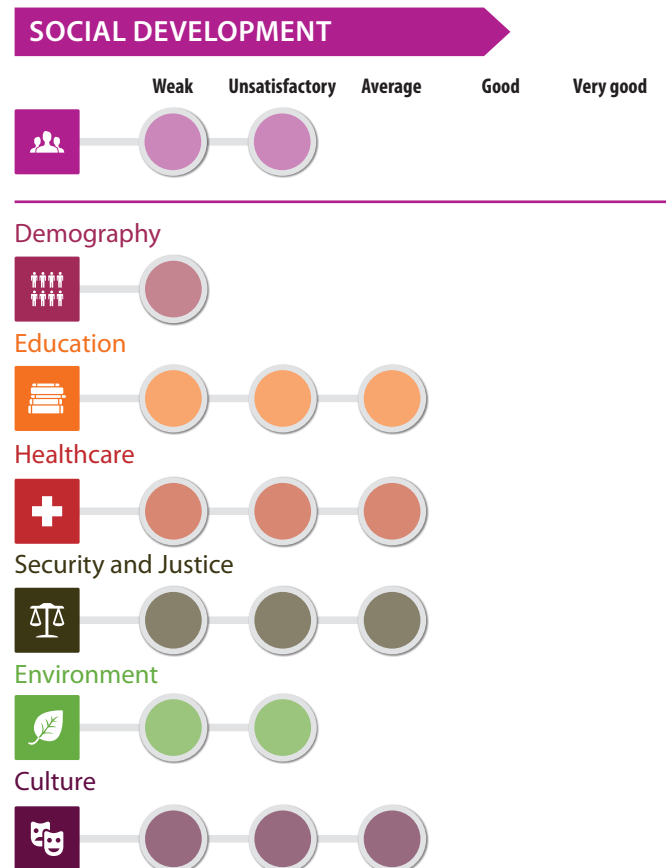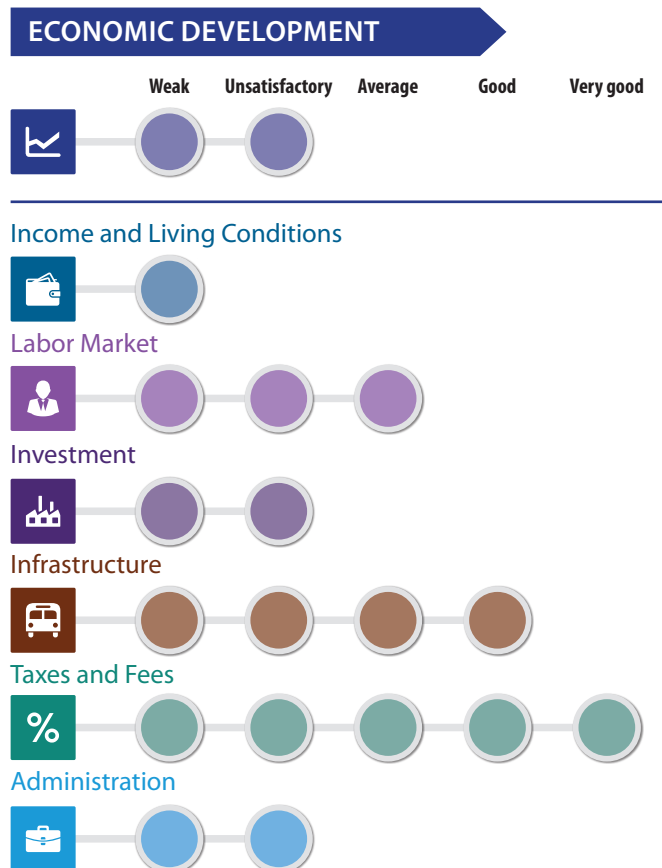
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

Income and Living Conditions ●

Vidin is one of the districts with the worst population welfare. Despite the low base, GDP per capita grew twice as slowly as the national average in 2015 to reach 6,258 BGN/person while the national average was 12,339 BGN/person. Salaries too were slow to rise and in 2015 Vidin was once again the district with the lowest average annual gross salary of 7,011 BGN while the national average salary was 10,535 BGN.

In 2016 the annual average income per household member dropped for the second successive year to reach 3,428 BGN while the national average income was 5,167 BGN/person.

These indicators predetermined the relatively high shares of people living in material deprivation and those living in poverty. In 2015 the share of the population living below the national poverty line rose to reach almost half of the population – exceeding the figures in the districts of Kardzhali and Pazardzhik, thus placing Vidin last in the rating chart.

Labor Market ●●●

In 2016, economic activity in the district dropped for the first time after a five-year long period of growth during which it had even reached values higher than the national average. The workforce was 68.2% of the population while it was 68.7% nationwide but unlike the tendency in the other districts, its dropping economic activity was accompanied by a considerable shrinkage of employment. In 2016, the district's employment rate was 57.0% vs. 63.4% in the country. Still, employment retained a higher level compared with the time before and during the crisis. Unemployment dropped though it still remained high: with a rate of 16.4% the district of Vidin had the third highest unemployment rate in the country after Shumen and Silistra – twice the national average of 7.7%.

The population's (aged 25–64) educational structure in the district in 2016 shows that the share of people with primary or lower education was on the decrease and it was the third lowest in the country after the capital and the district of Gabrovo.

Investment ●●

The district's lagging economic development is a reflection of the poor performance of Vidin in this category. The number of enterprises relative to the population remained among the smallest in 2015. FTA expenditure per capita rose considerably but was still relatively low. The picture in foreign investment was similar: in 2015 it rose to 864 euro/person but there was still a fourfold difference from the national average figures.

As of 30th June 2017, 102 m BGN had been utilized from EU operational funds, or 1,129 BGN/person, which was still below national average values of 1,344 BGN/person. Among the district's municipalities the city of Vidin utilized most EU funds – 1,400 BGN/person, while that of Gramada received least funds – 96 BGN/person. Until the beginning of the new program period the latter municipality was the single one in Bulgaria with no sums paid from operational program funds.

Infrastructure ●●●●

Road network density in the district is still above average but Vidin's location in the country's periphery explains why highways and first class roads (12%) make up a considerably lower share than the national average (19%). This also explains the worse quality of roads. In 2016 the share of road surfaces in good condition increased to 40% but remained below the national average of 42%.

Internet access as well as its usage in the district also increased in 2016 and are now above national average values.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●●

The average rates of the monitored taxes and fees in the district's municipalities place it among those with the lowest tax burden. What is more, unlike the widespread raises in local taxes and fees in the country, only one of Vidin's municipalities raised a tax in 2017.

The district stands out among others with its lowest average rate of the annual license tax for retailers (almost three times lower than the national average), mainly because of the rates in the Mokresh and Dimovo municipalities, which are considerably below national average levels. The tax rate for taxi transportation is also the lowest one in the country.

Administration ●●

The ratings of the administration for the development of electronic government and one-stop shop services in the district's municipalities rose in 2017, yet they stayed below national average levels.

There was a similar picture with regard to administration transparency. The district's average rating rose to 50.6% but it was still far below the national average of 59.0%.

Vidin was also one of the districts with the smallest share of its territory covered by cadastral maps. In 2016 it remained at 8% while the national average was 23%. Only 4 municipalities – Vidin, Bregovo, Kula and Novo Selo have partial coverage while the remaining seven have 0% cadastral coverage.

🏛 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ●

🏛 Demography ●

The indicators for demographic development place Vidin last among the districts in Bulgaria in this category.

Vidin confirmed its position as the district with the fewest inhabitants and was second in terms of most rapidly ageing population (after the district of Smolyan). In 2016 the natural population growth went on dropping at a fast rate to reach a value almost three times below average: –17‰ vs. the national average of –6‰. Another factor influencing the rapid depopulation of the district is the significant out-migration from it. In 2016 the net migration rate dropped to almost –10‰.

Although an increasing number of people in the district live in towns, similar to the general tendency in the country, the share of urban population is still low: 64% (vs. 73.3% in the country). This is the reason for the relatively low population density.

🗄 Education ● ● ●

In 2016 Vidin was one of the districts with the lowest rate of enrolment in 5th–8th grade: 75.6% while the national average was 78.2%. Besides, according to 2015 data, it had the highest share of dropouts from primary and secondary education (3.7% vs. 2.86% nationally).

Some positive tendencies were noticeable in both teacher numbers and matriculation exam results. In 2016 the district succeeded in attracting new teachers in primary and secondary schools so teachers reached a rate of 85 per 1,000 students (vs. 75 per 1,000 students in the country). The 2017 matriculation exam results show that students in the district got higher grades at the exam in BLL compared to the national average grades. Besides, the share of fail grades in the district also went down and remained considerably below the national average level.

➕ Healthcare ● ● ●

In tune with the rapid population ageing and the fact that pensioners have health-insurance, the share of health-insured people in the district went on increasing and in 2016 it reached 92%, which was above the national average of 86%.

The GP per population ratio in the district was higher than the national average ratio, though the specialist shortage remained problematic in 2016. The number of beds in local hospitals was also lower than the national average: 4.1 beds in general hospitals per 1,000 people (vs. 5.1 beds nationally). The shortage of specialists and the relatively small

number of hospital beds resulted in the relatively small number of hospitalizations as well. 169 per 1,000 people went to hospital in 2016 when the national average rate was 235 per 1,000 people.

⚖ Security and Justice ● ● ●

95% of criminal cases in the district of Vidin were closed within 3 months (vs. 89% on average for Bulgaria), probably as a consequence of the workloads of local judges, which were traditionally low in 2016 as well. A criminal judge in the district court saw 6.5 cases a month while the national average rate reached 9.4 cases per judge.

The rate of registered crimes against the person and property in the district (13.1 per 1,000 people) was higher than the national average rate of 12.6 per 1,000 people. At the same time the crime clearance rate in the district rose in 2016 to reach 57% (vs. 48% nationally).

🌿 Environment ● ●

Until 2014 Vidin was the only district without a wastewater treatment plant. After the construction of the first plant in the district had been interrupted because of suspicion of embezzlement, the project was resumed in 2017.

The relatively low urbanization level in the district determines the low rate of people living in areas with public sewerage: 57% vs. 76% nationally. The amount of generated household waste was relatively low: 250 kg/person annually (vs. 422 kg/person nationally).

The district is characterized by relatively clean air. In 2015, for the third successive year, carbon dioxide emissions were 142.9 t/sq. km or half the national average values.

🎭 Culture ● ● ●

Theaters and museums in the district continue to attract a considerable number of visitors. In 2016 theater visits rose to 484 per 1,000 people while the national average rate was 322 per 1,000 people. Museum visits reached 1,692 per 1,000 people while the national average rate was 734 per 1,000.

Since 2015 the district has had a cinema. In 2016 it registered 32,000 visits or 358 per 1,000 people (vs. 778 per 1,000 people on average in the country).

Key Indicators for the District of Vidin

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,546	5,640	5,916	6,066	6,258	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,052	3,615	3,614	4,383	3,677	3,428
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,532	5,855	6,195	6,663	7,011	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	42.1	39.1	38.1	43.6	48.2	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	62.5	63.2	67.5	71.0	72.3	68.2
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	50.0	52.2	55.6	55.3	58.8	57.0
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	19.8	17.4	17.7	22.2	18.8	16.4
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	18.1	15.7	14.6	17.2	21.5	18.5
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	32	32	32	32	34	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	874	1,156	692	925	1,756	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	329	622	615	547	864	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	46.6	33.7	44.0	45.4	48.0	67.8
Share of roads in good condition (%)	30.0	29.4	32.3	34.2	32.3	40.2
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	8.2	8.2

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−15.2	−16.0	−14.3	−15.2	−16.7	−16.9
Net migration rate (‰)	−1.9	−3.8	−7.1	−7.0	−6.3	−9.5
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.48	4.14	4.23	4.24	4.22	4.20
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	1.94	8.32	4.83	3.67	6.09	6.04
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	80.4	80.0	79.2	78.4	77.9	75.6
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	89.8	89.1	88.4	89.8	91.5	91.7
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	150.2	148.4	161.6	166.3	168.3	169.4
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	15.1	13.9	14.5	13.8	14.4	13.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	42.2	35.5	34.5	36.1	38.1	57.4
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	10.5	10.0	10.0	13.1	7.9	9.0
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	231.7	245.5	142.9	142.9	142.9	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	0	0	138	373	358
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	257	280	336	342	382	484

Vratsa District

▸ Population (2016)	170,367
▸ Area (sq. km)	3,619.8
▸ Number of settlements	128
▸ Share of urban population (%)	58.2

KOZLODUY
ORYAHOVO
MIZIA
Hayredin
BYALA SLATINA
Borovan
KRIVODOL
VRATSA
MEZDRA
ROMAN

Overview

Though Vratsa remained in the upper half of the GDP per capita district ranking, it was one of few districts where it dropped in 2015. The labor market in the district exhibited certain disturbing tendencies. Vratsa was also among the few districts where employment rates went down in 2016 while unemployment was twice the size of that in the country as a whole. The low quality of road surfaces is still a serious problem. Investment activity was weak though the average rates of local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities are relatively low.

The demographic picture in the district is deteriorating. The average grades at matriculation exams rose in 2017 to approach the national average. Vratsa was one of the districts with the lowest judge workloads and a high crime clearance rate. The district's relatively low urbanization determined the relatively small share of the population connected to sewerage systems. On the other hand, its air was relatively unpolluted and the quantity of generated waste was low. In 2016 the district's cultural life could be characterized by low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Income and Living Conditions
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average
●	●	●

Labor Market
Weak
●

Investment
Weak	Unsatisfactory
●	●

Infrastructure
Weak	Unsatisfactory
●	●

Taxes and Fees
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good
●	●	●	●

Administration
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good
●	●	●	●

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Demography
Weak	Unsatisfactory
●	●

Education
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average
●	●	●

Healthcare
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good
●	●	●	●

Security and Justice
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good
●	●	●	●

Environment
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good
●	●	●	●

Culture
Weak
●

📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

👛 Income and Living Conditions ●●●

Though Vratsa remained in the upper half of GDP per capita ranking, it was one of the few districts where it dropped in 2015 to reach 9,305 BGN/person while it was 12,339 BGN/person on average for the country.

Meanwhile, the average salary kept growing but the growth rate, compared with the national average, was lower in 2015 than that in 2014. Thus, for the first time since 2008, the district of Vratsa was lagging behind national average levels with an annual salary of 10,332 BGN (vs. 10,535 BGN for Bulgaria).

These tendencies entailed an increase of the share of local people living below the national poverty line, which in 2015 reached 37.7% while the national average was 22.9%.

👤 Labor Market ●

Some tendencies on the district's labor market generate concern. The economic activity rate (57.9%) dropped considerably in 2016 to figures close to the country's lowest of 68.7% nationwide. In Vratsa, alongside a few other districts, employment dropped to 50% while the national average was 63%, placing the district last in the national ranking. Unemployment on the other hand, dropped but the reason was not that some unemployed people had found jobs; it was because they had become economically inactive.

The educational structure of the workforce can provide an explanation for the problems of the labor market. In 2016 the share of the population aged 25–64 with university degrees dropped to 19% (vs. 28% nationally), while that of people with primary or lower education rose to 24% (vs. 18% nationally).

🏭 Investment ●●

Investment activity is comparatively low in the district. Vratsa is one of the districts with a relatively small number of enterprises relative to the population: there were 34 non-financial enterprises in operation in 2016 per 1,000 people (vs. 55 per 1,000 people in the country).

Foreign investment dropped to a figure over 6 times smaller than the national average values: 503 euro/person compared with the national average of 3,250 euro cumulative as of the end of 2015. The annual investment in FTA also dropped, lagging even further behind the national average rates.

Still, the district was characterized by relatively good EU fund utilization. 238 m BGN or 1,397 BGN/person had been paid by operational programs in the district as of 30th June 2017, while the national average was 1,344 BGN/person. The municipalities in the district with the largest sums paid to beneficiaries were those of Vratsa and Mezdra, while those with least funds were Oryahovo, Krivodol, and Kozlodui.

🚌 Infrastructure ●●

The road and railroad density in the district of Vratsa are close to the national figures. The district's location in the periphery of Bulgaria and the lack of a highway crossing it entail a low share of highways and first class roads: 10.1% vs.18.6% nationally. The relatively low quality of road surfaces is still a serious problem. 24.6% of roads were in good condition in 2016 (vs. 41.5% for the country as a whole). The river port of Oryahovo and the railroad connection between Vratsa and Mezdra play an important role in the district as the railroad junction at Mezdra connects it to the capital and the central part of the country.

Both the share of households with Internet access and that of persons who used it increased in 2016.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●

The average rates of local taxes and fees in the municipalities of the district are relatively low. The rate of the annual license tax for retailers is almost twice lower than the national average rate, mainly due to the low rates in the municipalities of Hairedin, Roman and Misiya. The average rate of the tax on taxi services is lower too. There is no municipality in the district of Vratsa with an above-average rate for taxi services.

In 2017 it was only the municipality of Kozlodui that raised the rates of two local taxes (those on immovable property and on the acquisition of property), while the remaining municipalities kept their 2016 rates.

💼 Administration ●●●●

In 2017, for the fifth successive year, the district's administration rated the development of electronic government and the availability of one-stop shop services as higher than the average level for the country. The transparency rating for Vratsa municipalities rose in 2017 though it was still below average values. The municipalities of Kozlodui and Krivodol once again got the highest ratings for transparency, while Borovan and Hairedin got the lowest.

In 2016, Vratsa was still among the districts with the lowest share of territory covered by cadastral maps – 8.5% compared to the national average of 22.5%. Parts of Oryahovo municipality received cadastral coverage for the first time while there was no development in any of the remaining municipalities. Six of the district's 10 municipalities still have 0% cadastral coverage.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ● ●

Demography ● ●

The district's demographic picture has been deteriorating fast as a consequence of low birthrates and high outmigration rates. The natural growth rate increased to −10.3‰ in 2016 though it remained considerably below the national average of −6.0‰. On the other hand, the net migration rate from the district rose to −9.1%, which placed it among the districts with the highest outmigration alongside Vidin and Smolyan.

The age dependency ratio in the district also kept rising and in 2016 the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 reached 176.5% compared to the national average of 147.1%.

The district of Vratsa remains among those with the lowest share of urban population. In 2016 the share of people living in urban areas was 58.2% while it was 73.3% in the country, which predetermines the almost twice lower population density.

Education ● ● ●

In 2016 the district of Vratsa had the highest net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade (85.8%) compared to the national average of 78.2%. The share of repeaters dropped to become comparable with the national average values but the share of dropouts from primary and secondary education in 2015 rose to over 4% (under 3% nationally).

In 2017 the average grade at the matriculation exam in BLL rose in the district to approach the national average grade. The share of fail grades dropped to 8.6% while it was 8.0% nationally.

The number of students enrolled in higher education institutions – the branches of the Veliko Tarnovo University and the Medical University in Sofia – increased once again to reach 1,033 in 2016.

Healthcare ● ● ● ●

2016 was the third successive year in which the share of health-insured persons increased in the district of Vratsa to place it once again among the districts with the highest rate of health insurance. Doctors relative to the population were still somewhat fewer than the average levels in 2016, especially specialists. For the first time in 6 years the district was lagging behind in number of hospital beds – 4.9 per 1,000 people, but the reason was that their number increased in the country as a whole. Hospitalizations were also relatively few.

Infant mortality dropped in the district for the second year in succession – its rate was considerably below national average in 2016.

Security and Justice ● ● ● ●

Vratsa ranked second, after Targovishte, in terms of low criminal judge workloads in 2016. A judge saw an average of 5.4 cases a month whereas the national average was 9.4 a month. This relatively low average workload also influenced the speed of administering justice: in 2016, 94% of cases were closed in less than three months (vs. 89% on average in the country) while pending cases dropped to 4% (vs. 8% nationally).

Vratsa was also one of the districts with a traditionally high crime clearance rate: In 2016 it reached 64% (vs. 48% nationally). At the same time, however, the rate of registered crimes against the person and property was still higher at 14.0 per 1,000 people while the national average rate was 12.6 per 1,000 people.

Environment ● ● ● ●

The fact that the district of Vratsa is relatively poorly urbanized explains the low share of the people living in areas with public sewerage (55.9% vs. the national average of 75.5%). Connectivity with wastewater treatment plants was also low – 51% vs. 62.3% nationally in 2015.

On the other hand, the district was characterized by relatively unpolluted air and small quantities of generated household waste. Harmful carbon dioxide emissions to the atmosphere in it were 111 t/sq. km or three times below the national average of 324 t/sq. km. Generated household waste in the district dropped to 262 kg/person annually (vs. 422 kg/person on average for the country).

Culture ●

The intensity of cultural life in the district remained poor according to the monitored indicators in 2016. Compared to other regions which have cinemas, Vratsa had the fewest visits: 57 per 1,000 people annually or more than 10 times less than the national average of 778 visits per 1,000 people.

Museum visits in the district increased in 2016 (190 per 1,000 people), but they were many times fewer than the national average of 743 per 1,000 people.

Theater visits dropped in the district to 184 per 1,000 people (vs. 322 per 1,000 people nationally). The interest in local libraries also registered a drop to 409 per 1,000 people (vs. 605 per 1,000 people nationally).

Key Indicators for the District of Vratsa

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,871	9,268	8,408	9,520	9,305	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,395	3,723	4,108	4,234	4,426	4,547
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	8,657	9,231	9,383	9,861	10,332	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	30.5	28.5	27.1	33.0	37.7	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	59.3	57.9	61.3	64.4	61.0	57.9
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	53.7	52.4	52.1	52.9	50.3	50.0
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	9.3	9.4	14.9	18.1	17.7	13.7
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	18.0	18.2	20.4	22.1	21.1	19.2
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	31	32	32	33	34	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,555	1,474	1625	2,152	1,880	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	929	834	876	781	503	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	34.5	45.8	48.2	38.5	31.1	70.8
Share of roads in good condition (%)	29.3	26.7	17.9	21.2	15.0	24.6
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	8.5

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−9.9	−11.1	−10.1	−10.8	−11.3	−10.3
Net migration rate (‰)	−3.2	−5.8	−7.4	−7.4	−6.9	−9.1
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.34	4.14	4.21	4.30	4.12	4.04
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	3.66	6.32	3.60	4.14	7.68	10.76
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	85.6	85.7	84.6	85.0	84.4	85.8
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.6	88.0	87.4	88.6	90.8	91.7
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	165.6	206.3	227.3	191.0	217.2	219.5
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	19.6	18.6	17.5	15.1	15.6	14.0
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	38.6	37.4	43.7	51.4	51.1	64.0
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	3.3	3.8	3.0	8.1	5.2	4.2
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	32.4	32.4	32.4	32.3	51.7	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	110.4	105.2	91.4	110.8	110.8	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	13	8	3	17	55	57
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	183	204	232	279	229	184

Yambol District

▶ Population (2016)	123,049
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,355.5
▶ Number of settlements	109
▶ Share of urban population (%)	70.3

Straldzha

YAMBOL

ELHOVO

Bolyarovo

Overview

In 2015 once again welfare was on the increase in the district of Yambol, albeit at a pace below national average. A stable rise in salaries and incomes as well as a relatively high employment rate explain the good living conditions in recent years. In 2016 the district's labor market improved significantly, though investment activity was still relatively low. The main local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities were close to national average levels in 2017. The district made no progress in cadastral map coverage and was lagging behind in electronic services.

Population ageing in the district is more clearly expressed than its national average level. Both education and healthcare are in a considerably deteriorated state. Yambol has continued to perform exceptionally poor at matriculation exams; the district is also one of those with the acutest shortage of specialist doctors. The workloads of criminal judges at the district court are relatively low which affects favorably the speed of justice administration. The crime clearance rate, on the other hand, is high. Cultural life in the district was not particularly intensive in 2016 once again.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
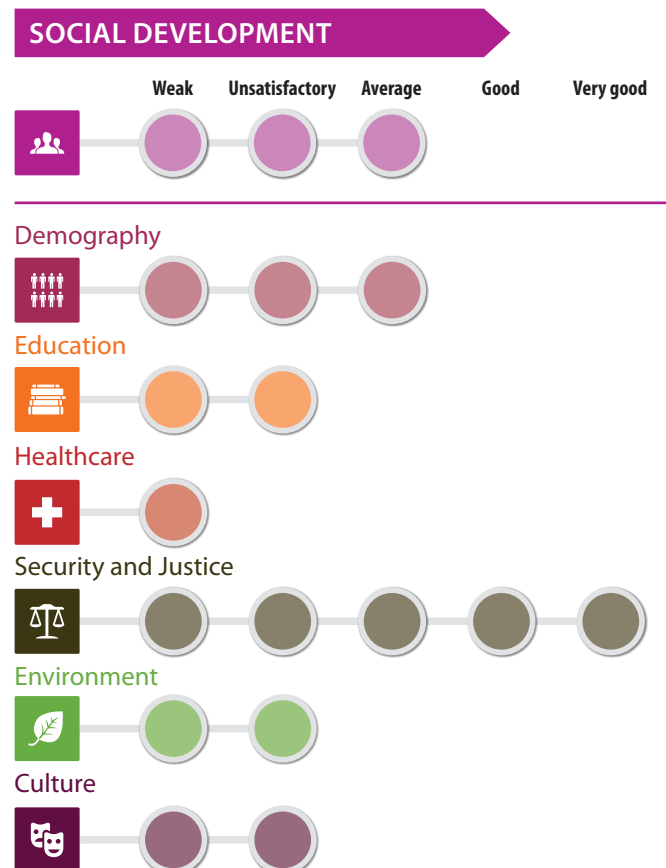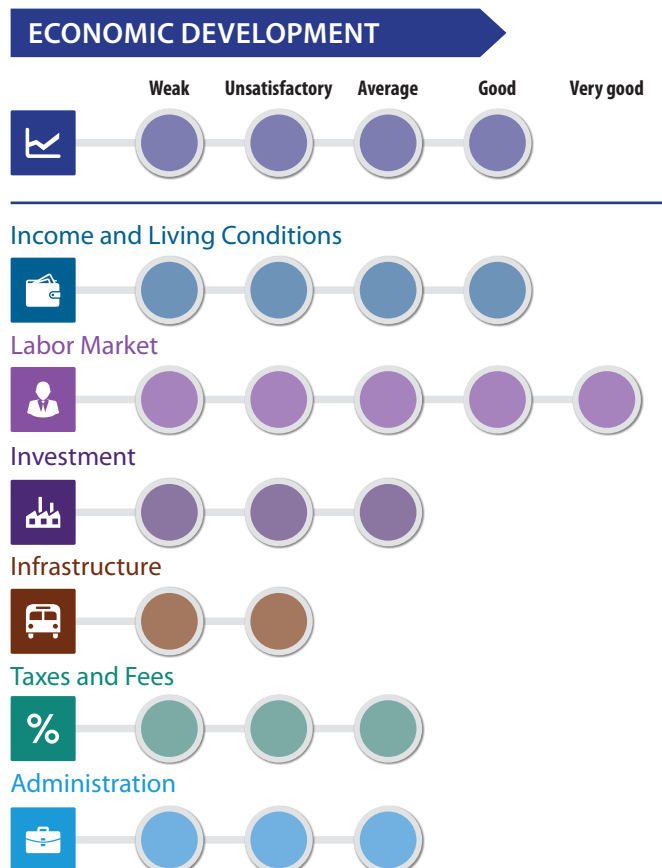
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

The district's GDP per capita continued its upward trend once again in 2015, though the pace of growth was slower than the national average. Thus its relative value continued lagging behind – 8,159 BGN/person of the population vs. 12,339 BGN/person nationally. The average salary was also below the national average though it kept increasing during the crisis and the recovery that followed. Annual average household income remained at a level comparable with the national average: 5,147 BGN/household member in the district vs. 5,167 BGN/household member nationally. Income structure was also similar to that in the country – over half of income came from salaries.

The stable upward trend in salaries and income, as well as the relatively high employment rate are the explanation of the relatively good living conditions in recent years. In 2015 the share of people in the district living in material deprivation, as well as that of people living below the national poverty line, were considerably below national average.

Labor Market ●●●●●

In 2016 the labor market in Yambol improved significantly. The population's economic activity rose once again in 2016 to confirm Yambol's position among the districts with the highest activity: 71.7% (vs. 68.7% nationally). At the same time, employment was on the rise while unemployment was going down which implies an intensive process of new jobs being created. The employment rate increased to 66.2% in 2016 when the national average rate was 63.4%, whereas the unemployment rate dropped sharply from 12.0% in 2015 to 7.6% (vs. 7.7% nationally).

What is behind the good results on the labor market is the relatively favorable educational structure of the population. In 2016, 26% of people aged 25–64 had university degrees (vs. 28% nationally) while those with primary or lower education were 13% (vs. 18% nationally).

Investment ●●●

Investment activity in the district continued to be relatively low. As of the end of 2015 the cumulative FDI increased to reach 642 euro/person though it remained five times below the national average of 3,250 euro/person. FTA acquisition expenditures were also considerably lower: 2,182 BGN/person in 2015 when the national average was 2,973 euro/person. The low investment activity was also connected with the relatively small number of working enterprises in the district: in 2015 there were 47 of them per 1,000 people (vs. 55 per 1,000 people nationally).

The district performed relatively well in EU fund utilization though their relative amount was still below average. As of 30th June 2017 sums paid from operational programs were 1,217 BGN/person in the district while they were 1,344 BGN/person in the country. The municipality of Yambol utilized the greatest amount of EU funds, whereas the municipality of Elhovo the least.

Infrastructure ●●

The railway network density in Yambol is two times lower than the national average in 2015 though the road network is well developed. The share of highways and first class roads (20.6%) was higher than the national average of 18.6% in 2015. However, in 2016 road quality dropped to levels below the national average as the share of road surfaces in good condition dropped to 41% (vs. 42% in the country).

The share of households with Internet access as well as that of Internet users in the district stayed below average in 2016 once again.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●

The average rates of the main local taxes and fees in the municipalities of Yambol district were once again similar to the respective national average rates in 2017. The annual license tax for retailers, made an exception: it was considerably lower in the district – primarily because of the Straldzha and Tundzha municipalities. The tax on taxi transport was also below national average while the vehicle tax was slightly higher.

The municipality with the lowest rates of local taxes and fees in the district was Elhovo, whereas the one with the highest rates was the city of Yambol.

Administration ●●●

In 2017 the self-evaluation of the administration for development of electronic services in the district's municipalities was once again lower than the national average, though that for availability of one-stop shop services remained higher, neither having changed compared with the previous year.

The transparency of local administrations rose to reach a rating of 60% in 2017 and overtook, though slightly, the national average rating of 59%. The municipality of Tundzha had the highest rating in the district (70%), whereas that of Straldzha had the lowest (41%).

No progress was registered in the district in terms of cadastral map coverage. In 2016 less than 17% of its territory was included in the cadastral map (vs. 23% nationally).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ● ●

Demography ● ● ●

Population ageing in Yambol was more clearly expressed than in the rest of the country. In 2016 the natural growth rate rose to −7.6‰ (from −9.5‰ in 2015) though it remained considerably below the national average of −6.0‰. Outmigration continued to play a role in population ageing – the net migration rate that year was −5.0‰.

Thus in 2016 once again the age dependency ratio as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 rose to 158% in the district when it was 147% nationally. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 15–64 reached 37% (vs. 32% nationally).

The district's share of urban population and population density remained lower than the national average rates once again in 2016.

Education ● ●

In 2016 enrolment of students in 5th–8th grade rose once again to compensate the big drop from the previous year and reached 84% (vs. 78% nationally). The share of repeaters and that of dropouts from primary and secondary education remained close to national average rates. In 2016 the district's educational system still continued to suffer from a shortage of teachers. Yambol was the district with the smallest number of teachers relative to that of students: 65 per 1,000 students vs. 75 per 1,000 students in the country.

Yambol, alongside Kardzhali, once again achieved exceptionally poor results at the matriculation exams in 2017. At the exam in BLL the average grade of Yambol students was 3.87 (vs. 4.22 in the country) and the share of fail grades reached 20% (vs. 8% in the country).

Healthcare ●

Yambol continued to be the district with the most serious medical specialist shortage in 2016. There were 789 people per specialist (vs. 530 per specialist in the country). The capacity of local general hospitals also remained limited: 3.2 beds per 1,000 people (vs. 5.1 beds per 1,000 people in the country).

The shortage of doctors and beds in local hospitals have determined the relatively small number of hospitalized people: 155 per 1,000 people vs. 235 per 1,000 people nationally. Presumably, the local population often looks for medical care outside the district.

In 2016 the infant mortality rate rose to a pike in the district, reaching the highest level in the country – 12.7% (vs. 6.5% in the country).

Security and Justice ● ● ● ● ● ●

The workloads of criminal judges at the district court continued to be relatively low which affected the speed of justice administration. A local judge saw an average of 6.4 cases a month (vs. 9.4 cases a month per judge nationally). In 2016 the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months rose to 93% (vs. 89% in the country) while that of pending cases shrank to less than 5% (vs. over 8% nationally).

Registered crime in the district continued to be below average. In 2016, 11 crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people were registered in Yambol (vs. 13 per 1,000 people in the country). The district also had a high crime clearance rate: 71% vs. 48% nationally.

Environment ● ●

After the district of Vidin, Yambol was the district with the lowest share of people with access to sewerage connected with wastewater treatment plants in 2015: only 4.7% when the national average was 62.3%.

In 2015 the district once again performed relatively well in the rest of the indicators in this category. The share of population in areas with public sewerage (72%) approached the national average of 76%; the share of generated household waste was considerably lower (330 kg/person annually vs. 422 kg/person in the country) while air pollution with carbon dioxide was almost ten times lower than the national average: 34 t/sq. km vs. 324 t/sq. km nationally.

Culture ● ●

Cultural life in the district was not particularly intensive in 2016 either. The single exception was interest in local theaters which increased for another successive year to reach 454 per 1,000 people (vs. 322 per 1,000 people nationally).

The greatest difference from average values for the country was registered in cinema visits: 193 per 1,000 people in Yambol vs. 778 per 1,000 people in the country.

Museum and library visits in the district were also relatively few: 298 per 1,000 people (vs. 734 per 1,000 people in the country) and 373 per 1,000 people (vs. 605 per 1,000 people nationally) respectively.

Key Indicators for the District of Yambol

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,550	7,130	7,168	7,773	8,159	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,602	3,814	4,572	4,133	4,437	5,147
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,343	6,679	7,111	7,472	8,053	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	19.1	17.9	22.8	15.5	14.4	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	69.7	72.5	71.7	69.4	71.5	71.7
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	59.9	61.4	59.9	58.8	62.8	66.2
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	13.6	14.9	16.1	15.0	12.0	7.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	18.0	22.4	24.2	23.7	29.0	26.0
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	43	43	44	45	47	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,624	3,011	1,326	1,741	2,182	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	522	513	416	459	642	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	40.7	46.0	44.8	57.2	56.8	57.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	54.6	54.0	50.3	51.7	52.1	40.7
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	16.6	16.6	16.6	16.6	16.6	16.6

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−7.0	−7.8	−6.5	−7.6	−9.5	−7.6
Net migration rate (‰)	−4.4	−3.8	−5.0	−3.8	−5.8	−5.0
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.48	4.06	4.16	4.10	3.98	3.87
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	5.11	10.59	8.49	9.98	15.59	16.83
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	84.5	83.9	83.0	83.5	78.4	84.1
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	90.5	89.8	88.8	89.9	91.3	91.0
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	144.5	160.3	167.7	139.0	157.3	154.5
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	14.5	12.5	12.2	10.9	10.8	11.0
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	51.7	53.1	57.0	60.2	60.0	70.7
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	6.7	7.4	10.3	6.6	6.3	4.7
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.6	4.7	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	10.5	12.9	63.8	62.7	33.6	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	85	61	59	134	111	193
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	296	278	383	421	427	454

Methodology

Subject, spatial and temporal scope of the study

The subject of the Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development study is the comparative analysis of Bulgaria's districts. That analysis covers the country's entire territory and is based on information from the last 18 years for which data is available for the indicators included in the study. Official statistics and information obtained in accordance with the Law for Access to Public Information until 30th June 2017 were used as sources of information for analysis needed to make possible putting together the regional profiles. Data published after this date was not included in the analysis.

Information Sources

The information needed to work on and regularly update the Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development study comes from two main sources: official statistics and information obtained in accordance with the Law for Access to Public Information.

The main source of official statistics is the national statistical system, more precisely the National Statistical Institute. Other relevant information is provided by the information systems of the National Social Security Institute, the National Center for Public Health and Analyses, the Ministry of Education and Science, the National Revenue Agency and others.

Methodological Approach

The methodology is based on the following main principles:

1. The selection of indicators and their integration into a system is based on four basic groups of arguments: good practices, assessment potential, data availability and empirical data analysis.

2. The use of official normatively established terms, classifications, nomenclatures etc.

3. The use of relative shares, rates etc. in presenting and using the indicators rather than their absolute values to provide comparability among regions.

4. Standardizing indicators in order to eliminate negative effects stemming from scale, measurement systems etc.

Grouping of Districts

Depending on the static analysis of indicators in each individual category, district performance is rated on a five-grade scale from "poor" (the lowest grade) to "very good" (the highest grade).

The analysis is based on the most recent year for which data is available (2016 or 2017). In the case of indicators for which no data from 2016 or 2017 is available, the data used is from 2015.

Types of Regional Profiles

All indicators are standardized by means of calculating the so called regional index.

For each group in the indicator system for evaluation of regional profiles the so called complex indicator is calculated, with the following characteristics:

- ▶ It provides comparability between districts.

- ▶ Its values are calculated around the country average. Districts with positive values of the complex indicator are located above the country average and those with negative values – below it.

- ▶ The distances (ratios) between districts in individual indicators are preserved in the variance correction procedure, which ensures non-shifting values when calculating the complex indicator.

System of Indicators

The selection of indicators is based on their relevance to the various aspects of a district's economic or social profile as well as their interconnectedness and dynamics. A key argument for the choice of indicators is their availability, accessibility and the regularity of their publication or of the publication of primary data needed for calculating them. Two main sections result from this: Economic Development and Social Development. Each

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
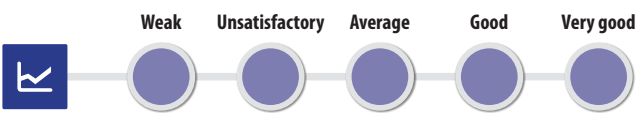
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
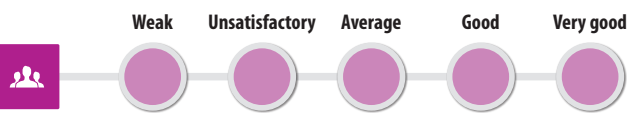
Demography
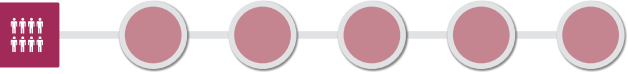
Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
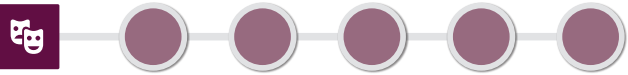
section includes 6 categories that characterize different spheres of the districts' economic and social condition and development.

Each category consists of a set of indicators which provide a realistic picture of the state and development of districts in the country. The total number of indicators used in the study's methodology is 65: 31 for the districts' economic development and 34 for their social development.

The following pages offer a summary table with all indicators included in the two sections and the twelve categories of district profiles.

Categories of Indicators

▵ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

🖼 Income and Living Conditions

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita	This indicator measures the standard of living in the district and the degree of development of the local economy. The higher GDP per capita the district has, the more indicative this is of a strong local economy and a higher standard of living for local residents.	2000–2015	BGN per capita	NSI
Average annual income per household member	The indicator shows the general welfare and living standard of the local population. For the purposes of this study, we used the total income, including cash income (salary and wages, pensions, social benefits, transfers from other households, proceeds from sales, etc.) and valued in-kind income.	2001–2016	total income/ person of the household/BGN	NSI
Average annual gross salary	Wages are among the main sources of household income.	2008–2015	BGN	NSI
Relative share of people living in material deprivation	This is a subjective indicator based on surveys of households on specific indicators of material deprivation. Eurostat methodology has been used. The questionnaire includes difficulties in meeting the costs of housing, ownership of a car or a washing machine, meat consumption, restrictions on heating, etc. A person is defined as living in material deprivation if experiencing deprivation on three of these nine indicators.	2007–2015	%	NSI
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line	A key poverty indicator. It shows the share of people with an equivalent disposable income below the so-called "poverty line", that is set at 60% of the national median equivalent disposable income.	2007–2015	%	NSI

👤 Labor Market

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15–64	The economic activity rate shows what part of the population is employed or actively seeks employment. The economically active population forms the labor force in each district.	2008–2016	%	NSI
Annual average unemployment rate of the population 15–64	Low levels of unemployment in a district are the sign of a vibrant and job-creating local economic environment.	2000–2016	%	NSI
Annual average employment rate of the population 15–64	The employment rate is a leading indicator of the labour market showing what proportion of the working age population is actually employed.	2003–2016	%	NSI
Demographic replacement rate (ratio of the number of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64)	The demographic replacement rate shows the ratio of the number of people aged 15–19 (who are about to enter the labor market) to those aged 60–64 (who are about to leave it). The demographic replacement rate is used as an indicator of the reproductive capacity of the labor force in the country's districts.	2010–2016	%	NSI
Relative share of the population 25–64 with tertiary education	A high share of population with tertiary education in a district creates prerequisites for increased competitiveness, labor productivity and economic growth.	2009–2016	%	NSI
Relative share of the population 25–64 with primary or lower education	An indicator of the educational structure of the workforce. The higher the share of people with primary or lower education, the lower the potential of the labor market to fill created new jobs. A lower education level implies lower economic activity, lower productivity and thus lower incomes.	2009–2016	%	NSI

🏭 Investment

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	The indicator shows entrepreneural attitudes and trends in the local economy.	2008–2015	number of non-financial companies/ 1,000 people	NSI
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita	The level of expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (FTA) per capita in the district is the leading indicator of investment in the local economy.	2008–2015	BGN/capita	NSI
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative)	The indicator of foreign direct investment (FDI) in nonfinancial enterprises shows the flow of investment to the district and its attractiveness to foreign investors.	2000–2015	EUR/capita	NSI
Utilisation of EU funds under operational programs (per capita)	The high rate of utilisation of EU funds under Bulgaria's operational programs creates preconditions for the improvement of regional competitiveness. EU funds are often one of few sources of capital investment for local public and private entities, particularly in less developed regions.	as of 30.06.2017	BGN/capita	MF

🚍 Infrastructure

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Road network density	The indicator measures the total length of motorways and roads (first, second, and third class) relative to the territory of the respective district. The national road network is essential for the transport of passengers and goods in the country. The indicator does not include streets in urban areas.	2000–2015	length of the road network km/ 100 sq. km. of territory	NSI
Railway network density	This indicator represents all railway lines between stations or places indicated as independent points of departure and arrival of trains carrying passengers and cargo. It excludes urban railway lines. The greater the density of the railway network in the region, the easier the transportation of passengers and cargo.	2000–2015	length of railways in km/100 sq. km of area	NSI
Relative share of motorways and first class roads	The indicator provides additional information on the characteristics of road infrastructure in a district. A higher share of motorways and first class roads shows a better developed local infrastructure.	2009–2015	%	NSI
Relative share of households with Internet access	Household access to the Internet is indicative of the spreading of new information and communication technologies in the country's districts.	2006–2016	%	NSI
Relative share of people who have used Internet in the past 12 months	Along with Internet access, the data on the share of people who actually used the Internet during the previous year shows the spreading and utilization of new technologies in the country's districts. The study targets people between 16 and 74 years of age.	2006–2016	%	NSI
Share of roads in good condition	In addition to road network density, the quality of roads also has significant importance for the infrastructural profile of the districts. This indicator shows the share of roads, the condition of which has been assessed as good by the Road Infrastructure Agency (RIA).	2010–2016	%	RIA

% Taxes and Fees

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Immovable property tax for legal entities	Property taxes are the biggest source of own revenue for municipalities. Regarding the business environment and the burden on business, the property taxation of companies plays a major role.	2012–2017	‰	Request for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act
Vehicle tax (commercial and passenger vehicles, 74 to 110 kW)	Taxation on vehicles is another major source of revenue for municipalities. This type of tax is a burden mainly on small companies, because the power of vehicles has been chosen so as to be most relevant for such companies.	2012–2017	BGN/kW	Request for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act
Annual license tax for retailers (up to 100 sq.m. of retail space – for most favourable location of the site)	License taxes are a different type of taxation from those mentioned above, and are a burden on particular businesses. The license tax for retail trade is selected as the most common and recognizable one.	2012–2017	BGN/sq. m	Request for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act
Annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities	The charge on waste collection is one of the biggest sources of own revenue for municipalities, comparable with the revenue from taxes on real estate. The charge on waste is often a heavy burden on businesses, and the differences between various populated areas/municipalities are significant.	2012–2017	‰	Request for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act
Local tax on the sale of immovable property	The size of the local tax on sale of property concerns foreign investors and entrepreneurs, entering the local market, as well as established local enterpreneurs trying to expand their operations.	2012–2017	‰	Request for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act
Annual license tax on taxi services for passengers	The size of the local tax on taxi transportation of passengers is determined by the respective munucipality and affects the final price of the service.	2017	BGN	Request for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act

💼 Administration

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Share of territory included in cadastral map	The low coverage of the cadastral map in a given district is an obstacle to investment, especially in new construction.	2003–2016	%	AGCC
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies	The active transparency rating of local government bodies is based on the results of an annual study by the AIP Foundation. The study evaluates municicpal web pages and electronic submission of requests to various administrative structures. The average score for each district is based on the ratings of the municipalitites it consists of.	2014–2017	%	AIP Foundation
Level of development of local government e-services	The indicator represents the self-assessment of local governments regarding the degree and scope of the electronic services that they provide. Low ratings indicate a complete lack or rudimentary development of e-services, while high ratings show a capacity of carrying out two-way transactions between the administration and citizens/businesses.	2013–2017	Rating from 1 to 4	Request for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act
Level of development of one-stop shop services	The indicator represents the self-assessment of local governments regarding their readiness to operate a one-stop shop.	2013–2017	Rating from 1 to 4	Request for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act

♣ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

♦ Demography

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Age dependency ratio (65+ to 0–14)	The indicator shows the ageing rate in a given district – the higher this indicator, the more clearly expressed the ageing of its population.	2011–2016	%	NSI
Age dependency ratio (65+ to 15–64)	The age dependency ratio shows the ratio of those aged 65 years and older, who are mostly inactive, and those of working age. The higher age dependency ratio indicates a deterioration of the age structure of the population affecting the labor market, economic growth, etc.	2011–2016	%	NSI
Share of urban population	The share of urban population provides information about the degree of urbanisation of the district.	2001–2016	%	NSI
Population density relative to the territory of the settlements and other urban areas	This density indicator gives information about the number of people per unit territory. Density is influenced by the rate of natural increase and net migration flows as well as urbanization processes.	2001–2016	number of people/sq. km	NSI
Rate of natural increase	The rate of natural increase is the difference between the number of registered live births and the number of deaths during the year. The indicator shows the increase or decrease of the population in the region per 1,000 people; a positive rate is considered a favourable demographic indicator.	2001–2016	‰	NSI
Net migration rate	The net migration rate shows an increase or decrease of the population per 1,000 people due to migration. The ratios are calculated based on data of the number of persons who have changed their usual residence over the period. Net migration is the difference between immigrants and emigrants to/from a given territorial unit.	2001–2016	‰	NSI

▦ Education

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Number of students at colleges and universities per thousand people	The indicator includes students in universities, colleges and specialised higher education schools, but does not include students in vocational training after high school. A large number of students in any district is a prerequisite for a better educated local workforce and increases the attractiveness of university towns.	2000–2016	number of university students/ 1,000 people	NSI
Number of teachers at primary and secondary schools per student	The relation between the number of teachers and the number of students in a given district is a standard indicator for measuring the quality of education.	2011–2016	number of teachers/ number of students	NSI
Net enrolment rate of the population (grades 5th through 8th)	The net enrolment rate of the population is calculated as a percentage of number of students in the respective stage of education in age groups relative to the number of population in the same age groups, calculated as of December 31 of the respective year. The number of students in primary and secondary education is established by October 1 of the respective year. The selection of grades 5 through 8 is based on the fact that this is the lowest educational stage that registers a relatively lower coverage of the education system.	2008–2016	%	NSI
Share of dropouts from primary and secondary education	The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education shows the number of students who prematurely left school that year. The low percentage of dropouts from primary and secondary education is a sign of a well-developed educational system capable of keeping risk students at school.	2008–2015	%	NSI
Relative share of repeaters	The relative share of repeaters shows the number of students who were enrolled in the same grade for a second year in a row. This indicator shows the quality of educational institutions, at least in terms of their ability to create optimal learning conditions.	2011–2016	%	NSI
Average grades at state matriculation exams	A high grade score from the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature is a sign of high quality of secondary education. Results allow comparisons across districts for each year.	2008–2017	Rating 2 to 6	MES
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	A high percentage of students who passed the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature is a sign of high quality of secondary education.	2008–2017	%	MES

✚ Healthcare

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Population per general practitioner	GPs are usually the first point of contact in the healthcare system. The indicator on the number of people serviced by one general practitioner shows both the availability of medical staff relative to the population and the workload of doctors.	2011–2016	population/ number of GPs	NSI
Number of people per specialist doctor	The proportion of specialist doctors to the population shows access of people living in a district to specialized health services provided in the district. "Specialist doctors" includes internists, cardiologists, pediatricians, surgeons, orthopedists/traumatologists, urologists, infectionists, obstetricians/ gynecologists, ophthalmologists, neurologists, psychiatrists, x-ray specialists and others.	2011–2016	population/ number of specialists	NSI
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	This indicator provides information about population morbidity and the workload of general hospitals. For the purposes of the study, this indicator is used to measure the level of morbidity in the respective district – the higher its value, the higher the morbidity rate.	2008–2016	cases of hospitalization/ 1,000 people	NSI
Health-insured persons as share of the population	The share of persons with health insurance shows the accessibility of health services in the district; it can be used to assess the health status of the population.	2010–2016	%	NRA (request for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act)
Number of beds in general hospitals per 1,000 people	The indictor shows the number of beds in general hospitals per 1,000 people. The number of beds serves as an indicator for the material base of health care in the region.	2011–2016	number of hospital beds/ 1,000 people	NSI
Infant mortality rate	The infant mortality rate shows the number of deceased infants up to 1 year of age per 1,000 live births during the respective year. A high rate indicates both shortcomings in health care and low health culture of the local population.	2008–2016	‰	NSI

⚖ Security and Justice

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Share of criminal cases in the district court closed in the first 3 months	The share of criminal cases in district courts closed within the first 3 months is an indicator of the efficiency of local judicial bodies.	2009–2016	%	SJC
Share of pending criminal cases in the district court	The share of pending criminal cases in the district courts is used as an indicator of the efficiency of local judicial bodies.	2009–2016	%	SJC
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court	This indicator shows the actual workload of penal judges in the district courts for the respective year. The higher the workload, the harder the access to the judiciary.	2010–2016	cases/ penal judge/ month	SJC
Crimes against the person and property per 10,000 people	The number of crimes against the person and property are indicative of the overall criminality in a given district. Officially recorded crimes do not always represent the actual number of crimes committed in the district, but provide a good basis for evaluation and comparison between districts.	2000–2016	number of crimes/ 10,000 people	NSI, MI
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered throughout the year	The higher the share of detected crimes, the better the work of law enforcement in the district. The indicator only concerns clearance rates for registered crimes and complements the general security picture of each district.	2000–2016	%	NSI, MI

🌿 Environment

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Emissions of carbon dioxide per sq. km. of the territory	Emissions of harmful substances into the atmosphere per square kilometre show how the atmosphere in the area is polluted by human activity. For the purposes of analysis, only carbon dioxide emissions were taken into account, as largest in volume, and at the same time most indicative of harmful emissions. Districts with high air pollution are less attractive in terms of living conditions.	2010–2015	tonnes of carbon dioxide/ 1 sq. km of area	NSI
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population	The amount of generated household waste is a standard measurement for the cleanliness of the environment. For the purpose of the study it is assumed that a high rate for this indicator implies a greater threat to the environment in that district.	2008–2015	kg/ person/ year	NSI
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems connected to waste water treatment plants	The availability of wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) suggests lower environmental pollution from sewage and higher utilisation of water resources. The larger the share of public sewerage systems, connected to WWTPs is, the cleaner the environment should be.	2001–2015	%	NSI
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems	The indicator shows the percentage of residents in a district who live in areas with public sewerage systems. The coverage of public sewerage has impact on both the social and the environmental characteristics of the regions.	2010–2015	%	NSI

🎭 Culture

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people of the average annual population	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities that shows the annual average number of visits to the district's theatres per 1,000 people of the local population.	2009–2016	visits/ 1,000 people	NSI
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities that shows the annual average number of visits to the district's cinemas per 1,000 people of the local population.	2009–2016	visits/ 1,000 people	NSI
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities that shows the annual average number of visits to the district's museums per 1,000 people of the local population.	2009–2016	visits/ 1,000 people	NSI
Number of visits to libraries per 1,000 people of the average annual population	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities that shows the annual average number of visits to libraries in the district with holdings of over 200 000 volumes.	2009–2016	visits/ 1,000 people	NSI

Appendix

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and Living Conditions

Indicator District	Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, BGN (2015)	Average annual income per household member, BGN (2016)	Average annual gross salary, BGN (2015)	Relative share of population living in material deprivation (2015)	Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line, % (2015)
Blagoevgrad	7,889	4,461	7,181	25.0	23.6
Burgas	10,310	4,592	9,102	37.1	19.5
Varna	12,589	5,117	10,000	46.3	26.9
Veliko Tarnovo	8,288	4,967	8,213	44.0	30.8
Vidin	6,258	3,428	7,011	39.6	48.2
Vratsa	9,305	4,547	10,332	41.8	37.7
Gabrovo	10,358	5,728	8,826	21.4	14.9
Dobrich	8,002	4,901	8,084	25.6	17.8
Kardzhali	6,472	3,887	7,648	45.9	43.3
Kyustendil	7,274	4,555	7,486	23.3	17.4
Lovech	7,759	4,123	8,033	39.0	29.2
Montana	7,270	4,191	7,971	21.6	32.8
Pazardzhik	7,929	4,229	8,006	47.2	43.3
Pernik	6,021	5,941	7,514	31.7	20.3
Pleven	7,039	5,666	7,892	26.9	23.6
Plovdiv	10,173	4,381	9,084	33.9	22.6
Razgrad	7,778	4,182	8,702	35.5	28.2
Ruse	9,912	5,263	8,563	33.3	21.4
Silistra	5,933	3,922	7,494	33.2	20.4
Sliven	5,921	3,685	7,830	38.3	38.7
Smolyan	8,557	5,618	7,679	42.4	24.1
Sofia (capital city)	26,690	7,349	14,531	19.2	8.0
Sofia	12,983	4,633	10,507	38.5	23.1
Stara Zagora	13,555	5,151	10,667	37.5	20.6
Targovishte	7,821	3,639	7,902	23.0	22.4
Haskovo	7,001	4,861	7,422	26.7	29.8
Shumen	7,577	4,845	8,505	33.1	29.4
Yambol	8,159	5,147	8,053	14.5	14.4

👤 Labor Market

District	Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15–64, % (2016)	Annual average unemployment rate of the population 15–64, % (2016)	Annual average employment rate of the population 15–64, % (2016)	Demographic replacement rate (ratio of the number of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64), % (2016)	Relative share of the population 25–64 with tertiary education, % (2016)	Relative share of the population 25–64 with primary or lower education, % (2016)
Blagoevgrad	69.8	8.3	64.0	63.9	19.4	21.9
Burgas	69.9	9.0	63.6	65.5	23.1	27.8
Varna	70.9	7.1	65.9	68.6	29.9	16.8
Veliko Tarnovo	70.3	7.6	65.0	56.2	27.3	14.3
Vidin	68.2	16.4	57.0	53.9	18.5	9.4
Vratsa	57.9	13.7	50.0	64.4	19.2	23.9
Gabrovo	72.2	6.3	67.6	48.3	25.9	8.2
Dobrich	69.2	9.5	62.6	62.5	22.1	21.0
Kardzhali	61.0	1.7	60.0	54.5	15.0	30.3
Kyustendil	69.9	8.2	64.1	48.5	24.8	12.0
Lovech	56.9	7.9	52.4	61.5	17.3	23.0
Montana	56.6	5.8	53.3	62.4	16.4	18.5
Pazardzhik	65.3	7.7	60.2	68.8	18.8	25.7
Pernik	70.7	12.4	61.9	49.8	18.6	10.2
Pleven	66.5	10.6	59.5	59.1	24.1	19.3
Plovdiv	66.5	6.8	62.0	66.3	25.2	19.7
Razgrad	65.5	14.6	56.0	63.9	18.4	36.3
Ruse	66.8	7.0	62.2	55.1	26.8	17.1
Silistra	62.8	16.9	52.2	58.5	18.5	35.2
Sliven	64.8	9.2	58.9	81.4	21.4	29.3
Smolyan	74.1	14.1	63.6	43.9	23.2	18.9
Sofia (capital city)	75.4	3.9	72.5	63.2	51.4	3.0
Sofia	62.2	6.9	57.9	66.5	13.8	24.0
Stara Zagora	65.0	6.0	61.1	63.2	18.6	14.9
Targovishte	59.1	9.4	53.6	67.5	18.1	35.7
Haskovo	69.2	7.1	64.2	58.4	17.2	22.7
Shumen	74.2	17.4	61.3	67.1	21.9	29.7
Yambol	71.7	7.6	66.2	58.3	26.0	13.4

⚒ Investment

Indicator / District	Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people (2015)	Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita, BGN thousand (2015)	Cumulative foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, EUR thousand (as of 31.12.2015)	Utilisation of EU funds by municipalities under operational programs, BGN (as of 30.06.2017)
Blagoevgrad	62	560,486	446,364	226,753,935
Burgas	71	1,478,832	1,704,392	562,998,982
Varna	69	989,946	1,760,957	398,713,124
Veliko Tarnovo	43	500,926	121,708	240,089,231
Vidin	34	158,093	77,842	93,565,257
Vratsa	34	320,229	85,676	221,247,758
Gabrovo	51	300,031	284,368	265,699,449
Dobrich	53	389,972	202,894	115,310,779
Kardzhali	31	201,181	176,317	132,987,651
Kyustendil	44	159,583	42,028	84,655,313
Lovech	42	301,926	147,443	160,008,525
Montana	33	240,820	27,355	155,969,327
Pazardzhik	42	434,903	486,357	199,027,542
Pernik	41	166,121	178,902	54,543,808
Pleven	39	498,247	282,479	190,693,613
Plovdiv	54	1,772,948	1,592,531	663,164,840
Razgrad	35	216,882	104,855	131,029,289
Ruse	50	500,056	337,023	199,737,829
Silistra	35	252,705	28,803	99,717,692
Sliven	36	228,991	90,252	111,643,846
Smolyan	47	203,648	83,064	83,658,788
Sofia (capital city)	85	7,999,484	12,111,790	3,249,311,539
Sofia	41	720,812	1,274,063	224,694,171
Stara Zagora	46	862,448	1,023,382	331,524,634
Targovishte	34	819,521	204,744	74,624,644
Haskovo	48	288,296	105,335	202,446,045
Shumen	39	355,433	103,320	179,213,306
Yambol	47	268,506	79,030	116,166,414

🚌 Infrastructure

Indicator / District	Road network density, km/100 sq. km (2015)	Railway network density, km/100 sq. km (2015)	Relative share of households with Internet access, % (2016)	Relative share of people (aged 16 to 74) who have used the Internet in the past 12 months, % (2016)	Share of roads in good condition, % (2016)	Share of highways and first-class roads, % (2015)
Blagoevgrad	10.5	2.5	64.0	62.3	46.0	13.7
Burgas	15.2	2.3	60.3	53.2	42.0	25.9
Varna	18.8	5.2	73.8	73.2	44.5	27.4
Veliko Tarnovo	20.1	5.1	56.9	59.8	25.4	16.3
Vidin	20.3	3.6	67.8	70.9	40.2	12.0
Vratsa	17.8	3.1	70.8	59.7	24.6	10.1
Gabrovo	24.9	3.7	54.3	55.2	34.1	17.1
Dobrich	17.5	1.3	65.6	62.0	42.1	10.0
Kardzhali	20.5	2.1	57.1	45.1	30.0	11.1
Kyustendil	20.5	4.0	55.4	44.8	52.8	20.3
Lovech	18.0	2.6	51.0	53.1	44.7	15.1
Montana	16.6	3.1	58.7	63.6	28.2	8.6
Pazardzhik	16.6	4.2	60.7	57.7	47.0	14.9
Pernik	24.1	4.8	57.2	58.8	47.0	16.8
Pleven	17.1	4.4	50.3	49.6	40.5	12.2
Plovdiv	17.1	5.4	68.4	68.2	47.6	17.5
Razgrad	19.2	3.5	64.3	54.9	28.0	11.1
Ruse	18.3	5.5	72.5	68.6	17.7	21.5
Silistra	17.8	2.5	55.1	55.1	53.1	11.3
Sliven	16.6	3.6	54.1	33.4	71.9	22.0
Smolyan	16.9	0.0	59.9	55.7	55.5	0.0
Sofia (capital city)	0.0	12.8	69.4	75.8	0.0	0.0
Sofia	21.3	4.2	47.5	47.5	35.9	32.8
Stara Zagora	17.6	5.1	66.7	69.3	55.7	28.6
Targovishte	20.4	2.8	58.0	49.6	47.6	14.7
Haskovo	20.7	3.5	66.9	65.1	34.2	21.6
Shumen	18.3	4.6	57.5	62.4	55.9	36.2
Yambol	19.0	1.7	57.1	54.3	40.7	20.6

% Taxes and Fees

Indicator / District	Immovable property tax for legal entities, ‰ (2017)	Vehicle tax (commercial and passenger vehicles, 74 to 110 kW), BGN/kW (2017)	Annual license tax for retailers (up to 100 sq. m of retail space – for most favourable location of the site), BGN/sq. m (2017)	Annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities, ‰ (2017)	Property transfer tax, ‰ (2017)	Annual license tax on taxi services, BGN (2017)
Blagoevgrad	1.57	1.26	11.71	8.36	2.15	427
Burgas	1.91	1.54	14.97	7.58	2.84	578
Varna	2.10	1.51	16.53	5.08	2.92	611
Veliko Tarnovo	2.31	1.51	12.05	7.88	2.64	403
Vidin	1.70	1.08	4.61	7.99	2.55	300
Vratsa	2.11	1.20	6.85	7.36	2.36	383
Gabrovo	1.75	1.28	8.87	3.75	2.21	451
Dobrich	1.54	1.49	8.70	6.24	2.92	300
Kardzhali	1.68	1.40	8.03	9.66	2.49	326
Kyustendil	1.55	1.17	10.02	6.03	2.06	300
Lovech	2.23	1.27	10.40	10.11	2.30	424
Montana	1.68	1.14	5.11	6.03	2.42	341
Pazardzhik	1.82	1.16	8.94	11.69	2.74	300
Pernik	1.87	1.36	9.87	6.54	2.09	356
Pleven	2.86	1.13	9.23	6.40	2.81	396
Plovdiv	1.90	1.42	13.04	6.92	2.50	588
Razgrad	2.02	1.37	9.16	7.45	2.51	329
Ruse	1.92	1.14	13.45	5.18	2.26	462
Silistra	1.74	1.27	7.96	7.64	2.31	348
Sliven	2.97	1.48	9.80	3.27	2.28	381
Smolyan	1.95	1.19	7.76	8.31	2.47	320
Sofia (capital city)	1.88	1.38	20.00	10.00	2.50	850
Sofia	2.20	1.21	10.73	10.05	2.54	407
Stara Zagora	1.45	1.39	13.81	4.32	2.26	335
Targovishte	1.42	1.39	9.04	7.05	2.24	303
Haskovo	1.90	1.37	12.58	10.44	2.51	340
Shumen	1.83	1.40	8.93	6.80	2.66	366
Yambol	1.87	1.39	8.19	7.74	2.45	359

Administration

Indicator / District	Share of territory included in cadastral map, % (2016)	Level of development of e-government, rating from 1 to 4 (2017)	Level of development of one-stop shop services, rating from 1 to 4 (2017)	Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies, % (2017)
Blagoevgrad	13.8	2.72	2.96	56.1
Burgas	22.0	3.47	2.90	57.5
Varna	36.8	2.95	2.92	56.9
Veliko Tarnovo	11.0	3.25	2.06	61.4
Vidin	8.2	2.78	2.22	50.6
Vratsa	8.5	3.12	3.00	57.3
Gabrovo	21.3	2.91	2.83	69.6
Dobrich	32.1	3.39	3.34	65.7
Kardzhali	3.4	2.08	2.33	44.4
Kyustendil	18.9	2.86	3.00	43.4
Lovech	80.5	2.80	3.45	62.2
Montana	12.7	2.95	2.81	58.4
Pazardzhik	27.1	2.37	2.60	57.0
Pernik	4.5	2.67	2.77	46.8
Pleven	12.5	2.61	2.97	61.5
Plovdiv	24.6	2.76	2.66	61.2
Razgrad	25.0	2.92	2.97	62.7
Ruse	13.2	2.05	3.43	63.0
Silistra	16.2	2.57	1.56	46.3
Sliven	23.0	2.76	2.03	62.4
Smolyan	32.1	2.43	2.38	47.0
Sofia (capital city)	97.9	3.00	3.00	69.1
Sofia	33.2	2.41	2.41	47.3
Stara Zagora	15.7	3.31	3.00	50.5
Targovishte	14.5	3.12	2.76	64.0
Haskovo	5.9	2.65	2.97	58.2
Shumen	30.0	2.60	2.75	47.0
Yambol	16.6	2.48	3.35	59.6

☷ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

☷ Demography

Indicator District	Annual average population (2016)	Age dependency ratio, (65+ to 0–14), % (2016)	Age dependency ratio (65+ to 15–64), % (2016)	Share of urban population, % (2016)	Population density relative to the area of the settlements and other urban areas, people/sq. km (2016)	Rate of natural increase, ‰ (2016)	Net migration rate, ‰ (2016)
Blagoevgrad	310,321	127.4	27.5	59.6	2,336	−3.5	−4.5
Burgas	412,684	121.0	28.2	76.2	2,260	−3.6	0.8
Varna	472,654	121.8	27.4	83.6	1,825	−3.3	2.8
Veliko Tarnovo	242,259	180.0	35.3	70.1	1,100	−8.0	−3.3
Vidin	88,867	241.2	48.9	64.0	917	−16.9	−9.5
Vratsa	168,727	176.5	37.5	58.2	812	−10.3	−9.1
Gabrovo	112,334	245.5	45.9	81.8	1,300	−12.7	−4.4
Dobrich	178,438	149.1	32.3	69.0	697	−7.3	−4.7
Kardzhali	150,837	135.9	28.5	41.2	1,869	−3.3	0.1
Kyustendil	123,431	221.6	42.8	69.3	1,183	−13.0	−7.8
Lovech	129,222	200.2	43.8	62.6	889	−11.9	−5.6
Montana	134,669	192.2	42.4	63.7	957	−13.2	−5.4
Pazardzhik	260,814	133.7	30.7	62.5	2,159	−5.8	−4.9
Pernik	123,770	206.4	38.8	78.6	958	−11.6	−1.9
Pleven	248,138	185.6	41.6	66.5	1,139	−9.8	−5.7
Plovdiv	671,573	142.5	31.4	75.2	2,525	−5.1	2.6
Razgrad	115,402	149.9	31.4	47.2	879	−8.2	−7.7
Ruse	223,489	181.2	35.1	77.6	1,727	−8.6	−1.1
Silistra	111,957	169.8	36.6	44.3	820	−7.1	−4.3
Sliven	189,788	104.8	30.5	65.8	2,719	−2.4	−5.0
Smolyan	109,425	192.4	33.4	55.7	1,895	−8.0	−11.9
Sofia (capital city)	1,323,637	120.4	24.8	95.5	4,937	−1.5	4.4
Sofia	234,185	169.6	35.9	61.1	756	−9.4	−2.9
Stara Zagora	321,377	149.4	34.2	72.0	1,525	−6.7	−0.4
Targovishte	113,694	141.9	32.4	53.8	1,106	−7.7	−5.6
Haskovo	233,415	154.3	34.3	72.2	1,089	−7.7	−4.9
Shumen	174,476	143.5	31.3	61.8	901	−5.6	−1.5
Yambol	122,276	158.1	37.4	70.3	1,126	−7.6	−5.0

Education

District \ Indicator	Number of students at colleges and universities (2016)	Number of teachers at primary and secondary schools (2016)	Number of students at primary and secondary schools (2016)	Net enrolment rate of the population (grades 5th through 8th), % (2016)	Relative share of repeaters, % (2016)	Share of dropouts from primary and secondary education, % (2015)	Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams, % (2017)	Average grades at state matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature (2017)
Blagoevgrad	10,861	2,594	35,249	84.1	0.62	1.49	8.36	4.12
Burgas	7,142	3,239	46,131	77.7	0.86	3.17	9.82	4.10
Varna	26,886	3,963	50,376	74.8	0.95	3.06	6.70	4.36
Veliko Tarnovo	21,683	2,009	23,556	77.7	0.96	3.12	7.81	4.20
Vidin	0	757	8,948	75.6	1.34	3.79	5.48	4.26
Vratsa	1,033	1,371	18,613	85.8	1.10	4.09	8.62	4.14
Gabrovo	6,454	734	10,089	77.5	0.83	2.34	6.84	4.17
Dobrich	757	1,379	17,718	68.3	1.83	5.05	4.30	4.16
Kardzhali	889	1,249	15,681	77.8	0.38	1.76	20.69	3.77
Kyustendil	0	887	11,625	81.1	0.79	2.01	9.01	4.12
Lovech	215	1,040	14,616	82.5	1.06	3.82	8.38	4.26
Montana	0	1,099	14,400	77.5	1.42	3.95	6.67	4.04
Pazardzhik	0	2,171	27,766	77.5	1.15	4.83	15.31	3.96
Pernik	40	850	11,325	80.3	0.71	1.53	9.05	4.17
Pleven	2,364	2,057	27,136	82.9	1.60	3.34	13.52	3.98
Plovdiv	36,868	5,059	68,892	77.7	2.05	3.82	6.35	4.33
Razgrad	278	1,012	13,126	84.5	0.88	3.31	12.18	3.92
Ruse	7,673	1,593	21,652	75.1	0.83	2.86	6.19	4.17
Silistra	376	834	11,392	76.6	0.59	2.27	13.25	3.95
Sliven	930	1,486	22,777	76.4	2.27	5.28	7.19	4.24
Smolyan	1,584	1,106	10,396	81.1	0.08	0.74	3.41	4.42
Sofia (capital city)	101,504	9,584	127,780	75.4	0.59	1.06	2.04	4.61
Sofia	3,336	1,830	24,787	80.4	1.77	2.52	11.34	4.03
Stara Zagora	5,155	2,427	36,116	81.5	1.22	3.45	8.29	4.15
Targovishte	0	895	11,710	78.2	0.65	3.60	5.45	4.02
Haskovo	266	1,732	24,472	79.0	1.21	3.51	13.30	4.03
Shumen	6,114	1,630	18,541	78.4	0.99	2.30	8.51	4.10
Yambol	791	921	14,231	84.1	1.09	2.28	20.17	3.87

✚ Healthcare

District	Number of beds in general hospitals per 1,000 people (2016)	Number of people per general practitioner (2016)	Number of people per specialist doctor (2016)	Infant mortality rate, ‰ (2016)	Hospitalizations in general hospitals per 1,000 people (2016)	Share of health-insured persons, % (2016)
Blagoevgrad	3.3	1,659	770	7.0	179.5	88.8
Burgas	3.1	1,902	622	5.8	178.1	84.3
Varna	3.9	1,597	427	4.8	172.0	83.8
Veliko Tarnovo	3.1	1,743	704	8.8	155.2	84.2
Vidin	4.1	1,411	694	8.9	169.4	91.7
Vratsa	4.9	1,654	616	4.8	219.5	91.7
Gabrovo	4.9	1,478	468	5.5	256.1	96.1
Dobrich	2.7	1,405	826	4.1	125.5	85.3
Kardzhali	3.7	2,394	782	5.7	167.7	104.4
Kyustendil	5.3	1,452	577	12.6	227.4	95.2
Lovech	4.2	1,420	621	9.2	205.2	91.3
Montana	6.4	1,480	701	12.5	276.6	88.6
Pazardzhik	6.6	1,610	577	9.1	276.1	85.2
Pernik	2.4	1,423	917	5.2	106.1	89.8
Pleven	7.4	1,216	399	10.4	325.2	90.8
Plovdiv	7.4	1,595	421	6.1	408.0	87.7
Razgrad	4.8	2,404	754	2.1	222.3	93.0
Ruse	4.4	2,128	609	6.7	235.7	87.7
Silistra	4.4	1,964	751	6.0	217.4	87.4
Sliven	4.5	1,257	818	8.5	221.8	87.5
Smolyan	5.0	1,658	720	6.4	224.8	95.1
Sofia (capital city)	4.8	1,587	389	2.5	257.5	86.2
Sofia	5.5	1,774	548	8.7	275.0	86.9
Stara Zagora	5.3	1,428	491	12.1	216.0	89.7
Targovishte	5.1	2,274	753	7.2	236.0	88.5
Haskovo	3.4	1,704	714	9.7	202.5	88.8
Shumen	2.8	1,517	759	6.3	135.4	88.9
Yambol	3.2	1,609	789	12.7	154.5	91.0

⚖ Security and Justice

District	Share of criminal cases in the district court closed in the first 3 months, % (2016)	Share of pending criminal cases in the district court, % (2016)	Actual workload of penal judges in the district court, cases/judge/month (2016)	Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people of the annual average population (2016)	Crearance rate for crimes against the person and property, registered throughout the year, % (2016)
Blagoevgrad	83.0	11.2	8.8	9.9	59.1
Burgas	94.0	8.8	8.4	18.8	38.4
Varna	93.0	5.9	7.0	14.8	38.6
Veliko Tarnovo	91.0	10.0	7.1	11.1	65.4
Vidin	95.0	9.0	6.5	13.1	57.4
Vratsa	94.0	4.2	5.4	14.0	64.0
Gabrovo	92.0	8.2	7.1	13.8	61.7
Dobrich	95.0	3.6	6.7	12.0	56.0
Kardzhali	96.0	6.4	6.9	6.1	63.0
Kyustendil	85.0	9.2	10.4	14.1	44.2
Lovech	93.0	7.7	6.9	12.5	58.8
Montana	85.0	10.0	6.3	12.0	51.2
Pazardzhik	93.0	5.1	11.8	9.9	55.4
Pernik	91.0	5.9	7.0	14.2	42.6
Pleven	95.0	5.8	7.6	14.5	48.5
Plovdiv	95.0	5.2	13.2	9.1	54.5
Razgrad	96.0	8.7	9.1	9.9	68.7
Ruse	96.0	3.9	8.0	8.9	51.4
Silistra	91.0	10.8	6.2	9.1	70.8
Sliven	96.0	6.7	9.4	11.1	62.4
Smolyan	96.0	7.5	6.3	5.6	73.6
Sofia (capital city)	79.0	13.0	14.1	16.6	32.2
Sofia	85.0	9.6	10.2	12.4	57.2
Stara Zagora	95.0	4.7	12.0	12.1	56.1
Targovishte	95.0	7.2	3.3	9.0	67.9
Haskovo	92.0	6.8	11.4	11.1	56.9
Shumen	94.0	5.8	8.6	9.0	62.7
Yambol	93.0	4.7	6.4	11.0	70.7

Environment

Indicator / District	Emissions of carbon dioxide, tonnes per sq. km (2015)	Household waste generated per capita of serviced population, kg/year (2015)	Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, % (2015)	Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to wastewater treatment plants, % (2015)
Blagoevgrad	14.1	600	80.9	31.2
Burgas	76.8	419	78.5	64.9
Varna	750.1	516	86.3	86.3
Veliko Tarnovo	46.6	539	68.2	61.7
Vidin	142.9	354	57.0	0.5
Vratsa	110.8	354	55.9	51.7
Gabrovo	25.7	959	85.1	74.4
Dobrich	4.8	468	70.7	70.7
Kardzhali	6.5	564	43.6	37.7
Kyustendil	668.9	419	75.1	61.9
Lovech	93.8	354	68.8	56.6
Montana	5.0	754	59.6	35.1
Pazardzhik	32.5	1,092	71.0	44.3
Pernik	261.3	704	78.9	73.9
Pleven	44.2	346	56.5	49.8
Plovdiv	137.0	563	80.4	64.1
Razgrad	46.9	377	41.8	41.8
Ruse	199.1	647	68.1	64.6
Silistra	15.0	409	52.5	7.6
Sliven	161.0	521	65.0	57.4
Smolyan	3.6	344	70.6	42.0
Sofia (capital city)	1,073.5	579	96.1	96.1
Sofia	39.9	331	77.2	41.7
Stara Zagora	4,383.6	374	70.9	61.3
Targovishte	128.5	515	56.6	45.2
Haskovo	125.8	413	72.2	54.5
Shumen	34.2	457	58.9	55.2
Yambol	33.6	591	71.5	4.7

🎭 Culture

District	Number of theatre visits, thousand (2016)	Number of cinema visits, thousand (2016)	Number of library visits, thousand (2016)	Number of museum visits, thousand (2016)
Blagoevgrad	34	108	135	115
Burgas	129	364	49	209
Varna	171	606	127	232
Veliko Tarnovo	31	82	555	474
Vidin	44	32	0	152
Vratsa	31	10	70	32
Gabrovo	46	44	115	385
Dobrich	42	39	65	265
Kardzhali	23	0	64	16
Kyustendil	14	27	45	111
Lovech	13	20	52	105
Montana	41	0	0	28
Pazardzhik	62	0	31	205
Pernik	19	0	73	59
Pleven	35	127	35	223
Plovdiv	165	650	79	294
Razgrad	36	17	165	60
Ruse	136	183	50	91
Silistra	25	9	187	25
Sliven	64	19	56	98
Smolyan	14	17	148	26
Sofia (capital city)	797	2,857	1,641	1,085
Sofia	0	16	22	346
Stara Zagora	127	219	148	306
Targovishte	52	24	128	20
Haskovo	54	34	64	40
Shumen	35	21	163	192
Yambol	56	24	46	37

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