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

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 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