

Pazardzhik District

▶ Population (2015)	265,090
▶ Area (sq. km)	4,456.9
▶ Number of settlements	117
▶ Share of urban population (%)	62.4



Overview

Pazardzhik is one of the districts with the worst indicators for living conditions and social inclusion, and one of those with the worst educational profile of the workforce. The recovery of the labor market took place between 2012 and 2014, while 2015 witnessed a minimal rise in employment and a drop in the population's economic activity. Investment has gradually increased but still staying below the national average. The rates of local taxes and fees are relatively high; administrative and infrastructural development follows the general trends. The population's age structure is relatively good but the

natural growth rate and the net migration rate point to an inevitable deterioration in the near future. The educational system's results are low and so is the intensity of cultural life. Hospitals have a relatively high capacity and the number of doctors is close to the national average, which explains the relatively high number of hospitalizations in local hospitals. The clearance crime rate is higher than the national average, while the judiciary is relatively speedy despite judges' growing workloads. The unsatisfactory condition of the environment is the result of the low connectivity of the population to WWTPs.

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

Pazardzhik is one of the districts with the worst indicators for living conditions and social inclusion. The share of the population living in material deprivation reaches 54.7% while the national average is 33.1%; the share of people living below the national poverty line is 50.2% vs. the national rate of 21.8%. The only district where a larger share of the population lives in material deprivation is Lovech (55.3%), and the only district with a higher share of poor people is Kardzhali (60.1%).

Between 2009 and 2014 the average annual gross salary in the district amounted to 77–78% of the national average, and in 2014 it reached 7,650 BGN, while the national average was 9,860 BGN. GDP per capita in 2014 was 6,842 BGN, while the national average was 11,574 BGN.

Labor Market

The recovery of the district's labor market was most clearly expressed in 2013 and 2014: the employment rate rose from 52.4% in 2012 to 59.6% in 2014; the unemployment rate dropped from 18.3 to 10.4%. In 2015, there was no change in employment rate and the population's economic activity declined. Thus the drop in unemployment was due not to newly created jobs but to the fact that part of the unemployed left the workforce. In 2015, both employment (59.7%) and economic activity (65.3%) remained below the country average figures (62.9 and 69.3%, respectively).

Despite the relatively good age structure of the workforce, its educational profile was among the least favorable ones in the country. Only 16.8% of people aged 25 to 64 have higher education (vs. 27.5% nationally) and those with primary and lower education are 26.6% (vs. 18.1% nationally).

Investment

Investment activity is still lagging behind in the district, though some positive trends have been noticeable. At the end of 2014 the cumulative FDI reached 472 m euro, while the annual FTA acquisition expenditure reached 405 m BGN. Both figures are record high; relative to the population, however, investment has stayed below the national average levels. FDI and FTA in the district amount to 1,781 euro and 1,512 BGN per capita vs. the national average levels of 3,006 euro and 2,786 BGN per capita, respectively.

The sums paid to municipality beneficiaries from operational programs amounted to 614 BGN per capita as of 31 May 2016, thus the district lags behind the average sum for the country (689 BGN per capita). The municipality of Panagyurishte continues to hold the topmost position, uti-

lizing 2,890 BGN per capita. The municipality of Batak came in last with 180.5 BGN per capita.

Infrastructure

In 2014, the density of the road network in the district of Pazardzhik was 16.6 km per 100 sq. km and has remained unchanged since 2003, whereas the share of motorways and first class roads was 14.9%. Though both indicators were below the national average levels, in 2015, 51.8% of road surfaces were in good condition, which placed Pazardzhik among the districts with the best road quality in the country. In addition, the railway network density in the district, 4.2 km per 100 sq. km, was higher than the national average of 3.6 km per 100 sq. km.

The district has been lagging behind in information technology usage. In 2015, 50.6% of households had internet access (vs. 59.1% nationwide), and 46.6% of people aged 16 to 74 used it (vs. 60.3% nationally).

Taxes and Fees

The rate of immovable property tax for legal entities has gone up slightly for the first time since 2013. This is due to the raise of this type of rate in the municipality of Velingrad (from 1.5 to 1.6‰) whereas it remained unchanged in all other municipalities. At the same time, the waste collection charge dropped in that municipality but went up in Strelcha and Panagyurishte.

The vehicle tax and the annual license tax for retailers stayed unchanged in the last four years, still lower than the national average. In 2016, the municipality of Rakitovo raised the local tax on the sale of immovable property from 2.20 to 2.50‰.

Administration

In 2015, the cadastral coverage in the district reached 26.8%, which is higher than the national average of 19.8%, but there are still four municipalities left with no coverage at all: Velingrad, Lesichovo, Septemvri, and Strelcha. Municipal administrations have rated themselves at levels close to the country average in development of electronic government and readiness to offer one-stop shop services.

In the active transparency rating of the local government by the AIP Foundation the average rate for the district fell to 49.7% in 2016 (vs. the national average of 54.2%). The municipality with the highest rating was Rakitovo (61.2%) and the one with the lowest rating was Batak (38.89%).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●

Demography ●●●

Though age dependency ratio has been relatively better than the national average figures, the rates of natural growth and net migration of the population have led to its steady decline. Each year more people have been leaving the district than settling in it. Thus in 2015, the net migration rate reached -4.9% vs. the national average of -0.6% . The natural growth rate is also negative, having registered in 2014 and 2015 its least favorable values since 2000 (-5.3 and -6.1% , respectively). If that tendency continues, 2016 could be the first year in which the natural increase rate in Pazardzhik will be lower than the national average. In 2015, 62.4% of the population lived in towns vs. the national average of 73.1%.

Education ●

Pazardzhik is one of the districts, which achieved the poorest results in high school dropout prevention and in quality of the educational system. The net enrolment of the population in high school is close to the average for Bulgaria but the shares of repeaters (1.4%) and dropouts in primary and secondary education (4.5%) are higher than the country average, 1.0 and 2.8% respectively.

Grades at the state matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature, traditionally below the national average in the district, registered further drop in 2016. The district's average grade dropped to "good" 4.01 (vs. "good" 4.17 for the country), whereas the share of grades below "average" 3.00 reached 14.6% (vs. 8.7% for the country). Only the districts of Kardzhali, Pleven, Razgrad, Sofia (district), and Yambol registered higher shares of failing grades at the exam. There are neither higher education establishments, nor any affiliates in the district of Pazardzhik.

Healthcare ●●

In 2015, the share of health-insured people in the district of Pazardzhik rose to 85.5%, which, though a record high for the district, was still below the national average rate of 88.5%. The infant mortality rate in the district has traditionally been among the highest in the country, its 2015 value of 11.8‰ being almost twice the national average level.

After 2006 the ratio of beds in general hospitals to the local population has become more favorable than the national average. That fact, together with the relatively high availability of doctors, was probably the reason why local hospitals were frequently used by the population. In 2015, 266

people per 1,000 were hospitalized, while the national average rate was 232 per 1,000 people.

Security and Justice ●●●●

In 2015, Pazardzhik remained one of the relatively safer districts to live in as far as the number of registered crimes against the person and property is concerned. Relative to the population, there were 10.1 crimes per 1,000 inhabitants, while the national average level was 13.6 crimes per 1,000 people. Since 2013, the clearance crime rate has surpassed the national average, reaching 46.0% in 2015 vs. the national average of 39.2%.

Though the workloads of criminal judges in the district court rose to reach 8.8 cases per month in 2015 (vs. 8.3 cases nationally), the share of pending criminal cases dropped to 6.9% (vs. 9.4% nationally). Between 2009 and 2015, the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months dropped from 96.0 to 93.0%, though remaining higher than the national 88.1%.

Environment ●●

Pazardzhik is one of the districts with unsatisfactory environmental status mainly because of the low connectivity of the public sewerage systems to WWTPs. Though in 2014 nearly 70% of the population lived in areas with access to public sewerage, only 27.4% of them were serviced by WWTPs vs. the national average of 56.8%. In 2015, the newly built WWTP started operating in the town of Septemvri, which is expected to improve this indicator in the future.

In 2014, the level of carbon dioxide emissions was lower than the national average, amounting to 35.5 t/ sq. km. The generated household waste has also registered better indicators since 2011.

Culture ●

Pazardzhik is one of the districts where cultural activities have been least intensive. Relative to the population, registered visits to the local theaters and libraries were about twice fewer than the average numbers for the country: 302 visits per 1,000 people and 583 visits per 1,000 people, respectively. Only museums have enjoyed an interest close to the national average rates (664 visits per 1,000 people), though a certain decline was registered in this respect in comparison to 2009 and 2010 levels. In 2015, the district still remained one of the five districts in the country without a cinema house.

Key Indicators for the District of Pazardzhik

Indicators of economic development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,641	7,118	7,554	7,242	6,842	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,989	2,972	3,460	3,755	3,570	3,728
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,087	6,368	6,862	7,264	7,650	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	33.8	38.8	45.5	50.2	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.9	66.1	64.2	64.5	66.6	65.3
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	57.1	54.0	52.4	56.0	59.6	59.7
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	15.5	18.1	18.3	13.0	10.4	8.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	15.2	16.9	16.8	16.6	15.3	16.8
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	38	38	39	39	39	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	910	1,236	1,265	1,227	1,512	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,161	1,446	1,581	1,719	1,781	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	25.9	38.7	40.4	36.1	49.6	50.6
Share of roads in good condition (%)	43.4	43.0	44.0	52.6	49.8	51.8
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	6.0	19.4	25.1	25.1	26.8	26.8

Indicators of social development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-3.4	-4.6	-4.5	-4.2	-5.3	-6.1
Net migration rate (‰)	-6.0	-2.5	-3.2	-4.7	-4.9	-4.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.2
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	6.5	4.6	6.8	6.9	5.8	6.6
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	79.3	83.1	82.5	78.1	78.9	78.7
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	81.4	84.4	83.4	82.6	83.6	85.5
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	129	135	265	279	153	266
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	12.1	10.9	9.7	10.5	10.2	10.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	50.6	41.6	38.2	39.3	41.8	46.0
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	4.0	2.2	7.9	6.9	9.8	6.9
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTP (%)	26.0	26.1	27.2	27.3	27.4	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/km ²)	38.3	71.6	48.7	37.9	35.5	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	77	98	86	123	163	154