

# Pleven District

- ▶ Population (2015) 253,556
- ▶ Area (sq. km) 4,653.3
- ▶ Number of settlements 123
- ▶ Share of urban population (%) 66.4



## Overview

Living conditions in the district of Pleven are better than they are nationally due to the relatively high incomes and the gradual recovery of the labor market. Investment activity is higher than it was in the pre-crisis period, though still below the national average levels. Utilization of EU funds is relatively good, though the levels of local taxes and fees remain among the highest in the country and administrative development is lagging behind.

The demographic picture in the district is more favorable than in other districts in the North-west of Bulgaria though here, too, negative demographic tendencies are

clearly expressed. The state of education remains unsatisfactory, and has even been deteriorating according to some key indicators such as students' performance at matriculation exams. The district has kept its leading position in healthcare, and the environment indicators are similar to those in the rest of the country. Administration of justice in the district is relatively speedy but the average crime rate is higher than the national one, while the clearance crime rate dropped in 2015. Cultural life has gained in intensity, though it is still lagging behind the national average levels.

### 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, average incomes in the district of Pleven amounted to 5,645 BGN, which is higher by 14% than the national average and higher than the previous year's by 602 BGN. The average annual gross salary was 7,400 BGN, which is lower than the national average by 25%, but that was compensated by households' incomes generated from other activities and by relatively high pensions.

The district is characterized by relatively low poverty levels. In 2013, the share of people living in material deprivation was 29.3%, whereas the share of those below the national poverty line was 10.1%. Both figures were below national average levels. In 2014, GDP per capita in the district amounted to 6,710 BGN while the national average was 11,574 BGN per capita.

### Labor Market

The district's labor market registered a visible improvement in 2015. Employment rates among the population aged between 15 and 64 rose by 3.2 pp to reach 61.2% vs. the national level of 62.9%. Though economic activity rose (from 63.7% in 2014 to 67.5% in 2015) unemployment had a slight increase: from 9.0% in 2014 to 9.2% in 2015. Having in mind the growing economic activity of the population, the labor market managed to create jobs for almost all people who joined the workforce in 2015. Some improvement in the educational profile of the workforce was also noticeable. The share of people with higher education rose to reach 24.5% in 2015, though still remaining below the national average rate of 27.5%.

The demographic replacement ratio improved to 59.9% (vs. 62.9% nationally), which means that for every 100 people aged 60 to 64 about to leave the labor market soon there are about 60 people aged 15 to 19 to join it.

### Investment

Investment activity in the district is relatively low against the background of most districts but, contrary to the dominant tendencies, it intensified after the crisis. The peak of FTA acquisition expenditure relative to the district's population was in 2012, when it reached 1,833 BGN per capita. Despite the decline that followed in 2013 and 2014, its level stayed higher than the pre-crisis one, though far from the national average of 2,786 BGN per capita. In 2013, the district registered a serious net inflow of foreign investment of 116 m euro. Nevertheless, the cumulative FDI relative to the population (1,208 euro per capita as of the end of 2014) was still lagging behind the national value of 3,006 euro per capita. The district is also characterized by a high rate of EU fund utilization by municipal administrations. Sums paid to municipal beneficiaries from op-

erational programs amounted to 822.3 BGN per capita as of 31.05.2016.

### Infrastructure

The infrastructural development of the district has been following the national average rate to a considerable extent. Road network density is a little below the national average of 17.8 km per 100 sq. km, while that of railroads is 4.4 km per 100 sq. km vs. the national average density of 3.6 km per 100 sq. km. Though the share of motorways and first class roads is relatively low, the quality of road surfaces is close to the national average: in 2015, 39.0% of it was in relatively good condition.

The relative share of households with internet access in the district of Pleven was 54.5% in 2015, which was close to the national average of 59.1%. The share of people between 16 and 74 to have used the internet in the past 12 months grew from 45.8% in 2014 to 56.3% in 2015.

### Taxes and Fees

Tax rates have remained unchanged in most of the district's municipalities since 2014. The immovable property tax for legal entities was 2.81‰ in 2016, which is higher by almost 1‰ than the national average. This makes it the second highest after the tax rate in the district of Sliven. The local tax on the sale of immovable property remained 2.81‰ in 2016, also higher than the national average rate.

The average rate of the waste collection fee rose to 6.17‰ in 2016, but is still lower than the national average of 7.64‰. The overall rise came from the municipalities of Levski and Pleven, where the waste collection fees rose by 1.10 and 1.91‰, respectively.

### Administration

Cadastral map coverage in the district has stayed almost unchanged since 2008 – in contrast to the country, where it has been increasing as a whole. A slight improvement was noted only in 2015 because of the increased coverage in the municipality of Cherven Bryag. The municipalities of Dolni Dabnik, Iskar, Pordim, and Knezha have remained with no coverage at all.

The development of electronic government and one-stop shop services in the district has continued to lag behind national average levels. In 2016, the AIP Foundation's Active Transparency Rating of local government gave the district's municipalities an average rating close to the national average of 54.1%.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

### Demography ●●

Pleven is the district with the best demographic situation in northwestern Bulgaria, yet, the natural growth rate remained  $-10.0\text{‰}$  in 2015, when the national average rate was  $6.2\text{‰}$ . The net migration rate was still negative in 2015, which indicates that more and more people were leaving the district. Both demographic dependence ratios – the ratio of the number of people aged over 65 to that of children under 14 and to those of working age (15 to 65) – have continued to deteriorate. In 2015, they reached 185.9 and 40.8% while the national average rates were 146.4 and 31.1%, respectively.

In 2015, Pleven had the highest share of urban population – 66.4% – compared to all districts in northwestern Bulgaria.

### Education ●●

Though being economically the best developed district in the Northwestern Region, Pleven has been lagging behind in the sphere of education. The local educational system's strong points include the population's enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade and the relatively favorable ratio between high school teachers and students (76 teachers per 1,000 students vs. 73 nationwide). However, there has been a noticeable tendency of shrinking of the coverage of the educational system in the last two years. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary school in the 2014/2015 school year is almost equal to the national average of 2.8%.

At the same time, the quality of education in high schools is deteriorating as 2016 was the first year when the average grade of the local school graduates at the exam in Bulgarian language and literature was lower than “good” 4.00. The percentage of those who failed at the exam grew by 4.5 pp. in 2015 to reach 14.7% – considerably above the national average level of 8.7%.

### Healthcare ●●●●●

Pleven is one of the districts with the best healthcare in the country, particularly where access to specialist doctors and hospitals is concerned. There are 1,244 people per general practitioner, the lowest number in the country. The same is true of the number of people per specialist doctor: 404 people in 2015. The number of hospital beds keeps growing. In 2015, the district of Pleven had the best ratio between the number of beds in general hospitals and the local population (7.3 beds per 1,000 people vs. the national average of 4.6 beds per 1,000 people).

In 2015, the share of health-insured people in the district grew to 90.8% vs. 88.5% nationally.

### Security and Justice ●●●

In 2015, Pleven was again among the districts with the greatest number of criminal cases closed within 3 months. The share of pending criminal cases fell from 11.0% in 2014 to 8.1% in 2015, when the national average rate was 9.4%. That dynamics was not surprising, having in mind the fact that the workloads of criminal judges dropped in 2015: 6.8 cases per month per judge compared to 8.3 cases in the country as a whole.

In the last few years the number of registered crimes in the district was higher than the national average levels, observing a slight increase in 2015. The clearance crime rate dropped to 36.3% but remained close to the average levels.

### Environment ●●●

The development of the water supply and sewerage network systems as well as that of the wastewater treatment infrastructure has been lagging in the district. In 2014, the share of the population living in areas with public sewerage systems was 56.7% vs. the national average of 74.9%. The share of the population with access to sewerage connected with WWTPs was 41.3% vs. 56.8% in the country.

The level of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere has been relatively low, in spite of a slight increase in recent years. In 2014, they were 56, 7 t/sq. km vs. 314,5 t/sq. km for the country.

### Culture ●●

The cultural life in the district of Pleven has improved, though still lagging behind the country average levels. After 2014 the number of registered visits to museums relative to the population surpassed the country average levels, and reached 716 visits per 1,000 people. The annual average number of cinema visits also increased to reach 511 visits per 1,000 people in 2015, thus gradually approaching country average levels.

The rate of visits to local theaters also rose, though both theaters and libraries in the district have not enjoyed interest similar to that in other districts.

## Key Indicators for the District of Pleven

Indicators of economic development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,399	6,317	6,298	6,639	6,710	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,206	3,902	5,091	5,431	5,043	5,645
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,093	6,308	6,646	7,046	7,400	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	29.5	21.4	19.6	10.0	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	61.1	61.6	61.9	66.1	63.7	67.5
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	53.3	54.1	55.5	58.1	58.0	61.2
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	12.8	12.0	10.3	12.1	9.0	9.2
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	17.5	18.5	21.7	22.9	23.6	24.5
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	35	35	35	36	37	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,056	1,079	1,833	1,618	1,473	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	532	652	736	1,208	1,208	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	27.2	35.8	37.3	47.6	43.8	54.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	28.5	29.2	31.0	38.8	39.0	39.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.8

Indicators of social development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-9.0	-9.6	-10.1	-9.1	-10.0	-10.0
Net migration rate (‰)	-5.3	-2.5	-4.4	-4.7	-4.0	-4.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.0
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	5.9	4.7	8.0	8.7	7.9	10.2
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	77.0	83.5	82.7	83.5	82.9	80.4
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	84.9	89.4	88.8	88.2	89.5	90.8
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	197	207	278	309	236	323
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	15.9	16.5	15.9	16.7	15.7	16.0
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	45.1	42.1	38.5	36.7	39.2	36.3
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	10.2	7.3	6.2	5.3	11.0	8.1
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTP (%)	39.6	41.0	41.0	41.2	41.3	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/km <sup>2</sup> )	51.0	62.3	50.6	52.8	56.7	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	150	192	185	214	388	511
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	79	108	126	141	138	172