

Sliven District

▶ Population (2015)	191,915
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,544.1
▶ Number of settlements	120
▶ Share of urban population (%)	65.7



Overview

Sliven has remained one of the least developed districts in the country but the state of the labor market has been improving and poverty rates have been on the decline. Salaries and incomes have been going up, though staying below national average levels. The district is still unattractive for foreign investment and its municipalities are characterized by very low rates of EU fund utilization. Administrations in the district work relatively well, but some of the key local taxes rose to record highs in 2016. The state of road surfaces remains the best in the country but internet usage is not widespread.

The demographic picture looks good compared to the rest of the country. However, education is not doing well: the relative share of dropouts from primary and secondary education has increased to levels exceptional for the country, while performance at matriculation exams has been declining steadily. The infant mortality rate is high and the ratio of doctors to the population is one of the lowest. The administration of justice is improving – the clearance crime rate is growing and crime frequency is declining. The environment is in good condition but cultural life is poorly developed.

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 ●●

Though the district of Sliven is characterized by relatively low incomes and widespread poverty, in the last two years there has been some serious improvement in indicators on living conditions and social inclusion.

The share of the people below the national poverty line dropped to 32.7% in 2013 but stayed both above the 2008–2010 level and above the national average level of 21.8%. The share of population living in material deprivation went down rapidly: from over 50% in 2011 it reached 33% in 2013, thus leveling with the national average share. Sliven has remained among the districts with the lowest GDP per capita. In 2014, the latter registered a slight increase to 5,936 BGN, thus reaching the 2012 level. In 2015, the average income per household member was lower by 14% than the average income for the country. The gross average annual salary grew to reach 7,265 BGN in 2014 but the growth rate stayed slower than the national average in the last five years.

Labor Market ●●●

The state of the labor market also improved in 2015. Unemployment and employment reached their best levels so far (10.9 and 55.9% respectively), but are still lagging behind the national average levels. The ratio of demographic replacement has reached its highest value since 2011.

The population's educational structure remains a challenge before the further improvement of the state of the labor market. The relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary and lower education dropped to 28.8% in 2015, but remained far above the national average level of 18.1%. The share of the population with higher education dropped for the first time in the last seven years, while the national level continued going up. The economic activity rate in the district was 62.9% in 2015: the highest level registered in the last three years, but also the fourth lowest in Bulgaria.

Investment ●

Sliven is the district with the worst rating in the “investment” category. FTA acquisition expenditure per capita rose slightly in 2014 to reach 1,152 BGN but stayed about 2.5 times lower than the average for the country.

The district is also characterized by very slow rate of EU fund utilization, holding the last but one place in the country. Contract payments to municipal beneficiaries from operational programs amounted to 378 BGN per capita as of 31 May 2016. The outflow of foreign investment continued in 2014, when the cumulative FDI

dropped to 483 euro per capita, which is over 6 times lower than the national average.

Infrastructure ●●●

Road condition in the district is still the best in Bulgaria but in 2015 the share of road surfaces in good condition reached its lowest level for the last six years: 72.4%. The density of the road and railway network remained close to the average levels for the country. The share of motorways and first class roads was over 1/5 of all roads in the country in 2014. Internet access and usage retained their low levels. The relative share of households with internet access was 44.6% in 2015, which is lower by 15 pp than the share in the country. The same year the share of people who had used the internet in the last 12 months dropped to its lowest level since 2010 – 42.7%.

Taxes and Fees ●

Local taxes in Sliven district rose considerably in 2016 to become some of the highest in the country. The immovable property tax for legal entities rose from 1.86 to 2.92‰ in 2016, its highest level for the last four years, which is higher by almost 1‰ than the national average rate. The reason for this sudden increase was the fact that the rate of the tax was raised in three of the four municipalities of the district. The rate grew fastest in the Sliven municipality: from 1.9 to 3.2‰. The same year the vehicle and automobile tax reached its highest registered level of 1.47 BGN/kW.

In 2016, the average waste collection fee of the municipalities in the district also rose to reach 3.27‰. The rate of the property transfer tax was raised for the first time in the last five years and reached 2.79‰ when the average rate was 2.47‰.

Administration ●●●●

The administration in the district kept its relatively good condition in 2016. Cadastral map coverage was 23%, staying unchanged since 2010. The self-rating of local administrations for the development of electronic government and the offering of one-stop shop services were close to the national average.

The active transparency rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation remained relatively high in 2016: 65.2% vs. the national average level of 54.2%. Despite the relatively high percentage, this is the lowest rating of the district in the last three years.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Demography ●●●●

Sliven continues to be one of the districts with a relatively good demographic picture, which is due mainly to the high birth rate in the district. The ratio of the population over 65 to that of children (aged 0 to 14) remained the most favorable in the country: 103.5% in 2015. That means that for every person over 65 there is one child, having in mind the fact that the country average ratio is 1.5 people over 65 for each person aged 0 to 14. The population over 65 is slightly under 1/3 of the population aged 15 to 64, a ratio similar to the national average. Nevertheless, the long-term tendency for both age dependence ratios is one of steady rise. The natural growth rate dropped to -2.7% in 2015, its lowest level in the last 15 years, but has remained still higher than the national average level of -6.2% . The district's population keeps decreasing due to the net migration rate, which was -4.9% in 2015.

Population density registered a slight drop for a successive year to reach 2,739 people/sq. km, but has remained the second highest in the country.

Education ●

Sliven is the district with the worst state of education in the whole country. In 2014, the relative share of dropouts from primary and secondary education rose to 4.8% and reached its highest level since 2010 when the national average level was 2.8%.

The share of failing grades at the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature rose to 6.9% in 2016, whereas the average grade in this subject dropped to "good" 4.15, which, though close to the national average grade, was the lowest since 2013. The long-term tendency in the last nine years for both indicators has been one of deterioration. In 2015, the number of teachers per 1,000 students also reached an all-time low of 64 teachers per 1,000 students, and remained the lowest in the country. The population's net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade rose in 2015 but failed to reach the national average level.

Healthcare ●

The state of healthcare in Sliven has been assessed as the worst in the country. In 2015, the number of people one general practitioner took care of reached its highest level since 2001: 1,777 people (vs. the national average of 1,619 people). The shortage of medical specialists is even more acute. The number of people per specialist doctor also rose to reach the second highest level in the country.

In 2015, the infant mortality rate dropped to 12.8‰ but has stayed still almost twice higher than the indicator for the

country. The share of health-insured people rose in 2015 but is still relatively low.

Security and Justice ●●●●

In 2015, the speed of justice administration improved and the share of criminal cases in the district court which closed within 3 months reached 94%, the highest level in the last seven years. Parallel to that, the share of pending criminal cases dropped to 5.2%, the lowest level both in the district and in the country. The workloads of criminal judges, however, grew to reach 8.6 cases per month in 2015, overtaking the national average of 8.3 cases.

Crime rates also dropped, which was probably yet another reason for the decreasing workloads of judges. The number of registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people was 11.6 in 2015, the lowest level since 2007. The clearance crime rate also improved to reach its highest level since 2009 – considerably above the national average rate.

Environment ●●●●●

After Sofia, Sliven is the district with the best environmental condition. In 2014, the level of carbon dioxide emissions were almost half the national average level of 314.5 t/sq. km. Generated household waste per capita was also relatively low: 329 kg per capita when the national average level was 442 kg per capita.

However, the construction of the public sewerage system in the district has been delayed. The share of the population living in places with public sewerage is 65.2%, whereas the share of the population with access to public sewerage systems connected to a WWTP was 57.6% in 2014. The national average figures were 74.9 and 56.8%, respectively.

Culture ●●

Cultural life is not particularly dynamic in the district of Sliven and has been deteriorating in the last few years. The annual average number of visits to theaters and cinemas dropped in the last two years. Still, in 2015 theater visits remained higher than the country average.

In 2014, the average annual number of visits to museums reached 488 per 1,000 people, but it dropped to 449 in 2015, lagging considerably behind the country average of 664. The number of visits to libraries stayed high, however, and went on rising in 2015, reaching its highest level since 2009: average annual number of 774 per 1,000 people. The national average was 583 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Sliven

Indicators of economic development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	4,984	5,559	5,938	5,654	5,936	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,907	3,605	3,226	3,014	4,017	4,236
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,000	6,191	6,589	6,999	7,265	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	30.6	40.8	35.4	32.7	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.1	64.6	64.5	61.7	60.7	62.9
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	54.8	53.7	51.8	51.8	52.4	55.9
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	16.7	16.6	19.4	15.9	13.6	10.9
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	18.4	18.7	18.7	20.5	22.5	21.8
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	36	35	35	35	35	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	916	1,491	1,636	1,132	1,152	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	2,303	2,561	548	504	483	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	27.5	36.5	37.0	41.1	49.8	44.6
Share of roads in good condition (%)	82.5	82.0	82.0	79.3	80.3	72.4
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	23.0	23.0	23.0	23.0	23.0	23.0

Indicators of social development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-2.6	-2.0	-2.3	-2.2	-2.5	-2.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-11.8	-2.8	-4.5	-5.1	-4.1	-4.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.3	4.5	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	5.4	4.4	6.5	7.0	9.0	5.9
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	74.2	75.5	73.6	74.4	75.0	75.2
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	84.7	86.1	85.0	84.4	85.6	87.4
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	140	148	218	221	154	217
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	14.4	14.2	14.4	12.6	12.5	11.6
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	48.6	42.4	41.6	45.6	47.8	51.8
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	9.6	7.2	7.0	9.3	13.7	5.2
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTP (%)	57.3	57.7	57.6	57.6	57.6	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/km ²)	78.5	78.5	198.0	161.0	161.0	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	36	20	152	93	84
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	227	273	310	357	350	314