Smolyan District

▶ Population (2015)	112,793
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,192.8
▶ Number of settlements	242
▶ Share of urban population (%)	55.5

Map labels: Borino, DOSPAT, DEVIN, CHEPELARE, Banite, SMOLYAN, MADAN, RUDOZEM, NEDELINO, ZLATOGRAD

Overview

The income level in the district of Smolyan is relatively high due to the high employment rate of the population. In 2015, unemployment dropped for the second successive year, but, due to the high economic activity of the population, it has remained above the national average level. Investment activity has yet to reach its pre-crisis levels, whereas EU fund utilization is lagging behind the levels of most districts. There are no first class roads or motorways in the district but road surface quality is good. Local taxes and fees are relatively low and the development of administrative services is similar to that in the rest of the country. Smolyan has been the district with the least favorable net migration rate of the population in the last four years. School education has achieved a good coverage and the performance of local students at the state matriculation in Bulgarian language and literature has been among the best in Bulgaria. Despite a certain shortage of doctors, healthcare has maintained a relatively good level. The district is characterized by low crime rates, high clearance crime rates, and relatively speedy justice administration. The environment is well preserved, air pollution with carbon dioxide being among the lowest in the country. Cultural development is lagging behind considerably, though some positive tendencies have been noticeable in recent years.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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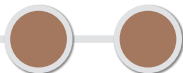
Income and Living Conditions

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 ● ● ● ●

In 2014, GDP per capita in the district of Smolyan reached 7,554 BGN (vs. 11,574 for the country as a whole). Though the gross annual average salary was below the country average, incomes per household member reached 5,419 BGN in 2015 while the national average was 4,953 BGN. The main reason was the relatively high employment rate in the district. Though the relative share of people living below the national poverty line was higher than the 21.8% average for the country, the share of people living in material deprivation was relatively low: 20.6% in the region vs. 33.1% nationally.

Labor Market ● ● ●

Smolyan is the district with the highest economic activity of the population registered in 2015 – 77.2%. In the context of the continuing employment growth, which has already surpassed the national average of 62.9%, it was precisely the high economic activity that caused the high relative share of unemployed people. Thanks to the creation of new jobs in 2015, the unemployment rate dropped for the second successive year. Yet, it remained quite high – 17.2%, the fifth highest in the country.

The negative demographic development has affected the demographic replacement ratio – 46.8%, which was the lowest in Bulgaria in 2015 (vs. the national level of 63.5%). That means that for every 100 persons between 60 and 64 leaving the workforce there were almost 47 persons aged 15 to 19 about to join it. The educational profile of the workforce was also unfavorable in 2015: 21.7% of people aged 25 to 64 had higher education (vs. 27.5% at the national level) and 21.8% had primary or lower education (vs. 18.1% nationally).

Investment ●

Smolyan is one of the districts where investment activity has traditionally been low. Between the end of 2009 and the end of 2010 cumulative FDI in the district dropped from 113.6 to 70.4 m euro. Four years later, it rose by 5 m euro; relative to the population, FDI amounted to 666.5 euro per capita as of the end of 2014. That was 4.5 times below the average levels for the country. Although expenditure for the acquisition of FTA remained far below pre-crisis levels, it marked a clear positive tendency. In 2014, it reached 1,775 BGN per capita relative to the population, while the national average level was 2,786 BGN per capita.

EU fund absorption by the municipalities in Smolyan as beneficiaries of operational programs has also lagged behind the average rates in the country, the sums paid amounting to 54 m BGN as of 31 May 2016. Relative to the population, this amounts to 481 BGN per capita (vs. the national average of 689 BGN per capita). The only municipality to achieve a utilization rate higher than the average was Smolyan (773 BGN per capita), while the worst result was registered in the municipality of Devin (195 BGN per capita).

Infrastructure ● ●

Infrastructural development in the district of Smolyan is strongly dependent on its mostly mountainous terrain. The road network density is close to the national average, but there are neither first class roads or motorways, nor railway transport. In 2015, the quality of road surfaces improved for the third successive year, the share of roads in good condition reaching 54.5%, which was considerably higher than the average rate for Bulgaria of 40.7%.

There was a certain lag in the IT sphere. The share of people aged 16 to 74 who used the internet in the last 12 months rose to 55.8%, still below the national average level of 60.3%. Only 52.3% of households had internet access in the district (vs. 59.1% nationwide).

Taxes and Fees ● ● ● ●

Local taxes in the district of Smolyan remained relatively low compared to national average levels; changes in tax rates were infrequent. Only the waste collection fee for immovable property of legal entities was above the national average level; in 2016 it rose further in the municipalities of Rudozem and Smolyan. The annual tax on immovable property for legal entities and the local tax on the sale of immovable property remained close to, but still below average. The vehicle tax and the annual license tax for retailers were considerably lower than those in most other districts.

Administration ● ● ●

Cadastral maps covered almost 1/3 of the district's territory in 2015 but this figure had not changed in the four preceding years. Still, cadastral coverage was considerably higher than the national average of 19.8%; the only municipality with no coverage at all was Nedelino. Municipalities in the district declared a readiness for one-stop shop services – slightly lower than the national average. As for electronic government, the development of such services in the district is similar to the general tendencies in the country.

In 2016, the municipalities in Smolyan district were rated 46.9% in the Active Transparency Rating of the AIP Foundation. Only Smolyan (55.4%) and Devin (55.0%) achieved levels above the national average of 54.2%

⚉ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

⚏ Demography ●●

Smolyan is characterized by a 31.7% ratio between people over 65 and people aged 15 to 64, which is close to the national figure. The ratio between senior people and the population under 14 reached 186.7% (vs. the national average level of 146.4%). The rapid growth of the latter age dependence ratio in recent years has been a consequence of the district's low birth rate and the worsening natural growth rate of the population (−8.2‰ in 2015 vs. the national level of −6.2‰).

In addition, in the last four years Smolyan was the district with the most unfavorable net migration rate of the population. The district is characterized by relatively poor urbanization. In 2015, 55.5% of the population lived in urban areas when the national average level was 73.1%.

▤ Education ●●●●●

School education in Smolyan has achieved some of the best results both with regard to inclusion of the eligible for education and to education quality. In 2015, the net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade reached 83.3% – only the districts of Blagoevgrad, Vratsa, and Razgrad registered higher values for this indicator. The share of repeaters (0.2% in 2015), as well as that of dropouts from primary and secondary education (0.7% in 2014), were the lowest in Bulgaria.

In the last four years, school leavers in the district achieved above-average results at the exam in Bulgarian language and literature. This was true both of the average grade and of the share of failing grades. In 2016, the only district with an average grade higher than that of Smolyan was the capital.

Smolyan district has the highest number of teachers in primary and secondary education relative to the population (91 teachers per 1,000 students vs. 73 on average in the country), which probably contributes to the good performance of students.

✚ Healthcare ●●●●

In 2015, the percentage of health-insured people reached 94.4%, one of the highest levels in the country and way above the average 88.5%. The ratio of general practitioners to the population (1,659 people/doctor) is near the average for the country (1,619 people/doctor), but there is a shortage of specialist doctors. Though the infant mortality rate rose compared to 2014, reaching 5.4‰ in 2015, it has still remained among the lowest in the country. There are 535 beds in the general hospitals in the district, which made

4.7 beds per 1,000 people (vs. 4.6 beds per 1,000 people on average in Bulgaria).

⚖ Security and Justice ●●●●●

Smolyan was among the safest districts in the country in 2015, with 6.1 registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people, while the national average rate was 13.6. Apart from its low crime rate, Smolyan is also characterized by a traditionally high clearance crime rate of 56.7% in 2015 vs. 39.2% in the country.

In 2015, the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months by the district court reached 95% vs. 88.1% in the country, and the share of pending criminal cases dropped to 5.2% (vs. 9.4% in the country). Some of the good results may have been due to the judges' low workloads: in 2015, one judge had 6.4 cases per month on average (vs. 8.3 nationally).

🍃 Environment ●●●●

The level of carbon dioxide emissions in Smolyan is the lowest in the country. Relative to the territory they amounted to barely 4.0 t/sq. km in 2014, when the national average level was 314.5 t/sq. km. The generated household waste per capita was lower than the national average figure: 329 kg per capita in the district vs. 442 kg in the country.

In 2014, over 64% of the population lived in areas with public sewerage systems and the connectivity to WWTPs reached almost 40% as result of the opening in 2010 of a new WWTP in Smolyan municipality, built by EU funds. However, the district has been lagging behind the country average levels (69.4 and 56.8%, respectively) in both indicators.

🎭 Culture ●

Though Smolyan has been lagging behind most districts in cultural development, there have been some positive tendencies, too. A cinema opened in the district in 2014; interest in it went on growing in 2015. After a period of three years (2011 to 2013), when there were practically no registered theatre visits in the district, in 2014 and 2015 they were 8,000 and 10,800 annually. Relative to the population, visits to both cinemas and theatres were way below average levels in Bulgaria. The same holds true of local museums and libraries which registered 235 and 194 visits per 1,000 people, respectively: both rates being about 3 times below average for the country.

Key Indicators for the District of Smolyan

Indicators of economic development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,875	7,287	7,385	7,142	7,554	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,890	4,180	4,242	4,590	5,315	5,419
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,134	6,122	6,516	6,800	7,253	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	28.9	32.1	36.8	30.8	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.8	67.2	70.8	74.2	76.1	77.2
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	54.8	50.4	55.3	59.3	61.2	63.9
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	19.2	25.0	21.9	20.3	19.4	17.2
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	17.2	16.6	18.2	20.0	21.0	21.7
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	47	43	44	44	45	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	860	1,081	1,010	1,202	1,775	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	569	599	631	661	666	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	32.3	31.3	45.3	45.2	55.4	52.3
Share of roads in good condition (%)	43.8	42.7	41.0	45.3	49.5	54.5
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	26.5	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1

Indicators of social development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−4.3	−6.4	−6.7	−6.6	−7.8	−8.2
Net migration rate (‰)	−13.5	−5.4	−7.3	−14.7	−11.6	−12.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.4	4.4
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	6.0	5.4	5.6	3.9	3.4	2.5
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	85.0	85.3	84.1	82.3	82.4	83.3
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	91.4	91.2	90.4	90.0	91.6	94.4
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	193	183	180	197	212	214
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	6.1	4.8	4.7	5.7	5.4	6.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	65.9	69.5	68.7	57.9	53.5	56.7
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	7.9	11.1	6.5	6.7	8.2	5.2
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	39.0	39.0	39.1	39.3	39.5	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/km2)	4.5	4.8	5.3	4.8	4.0	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	0	0	0	139	153
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	52	1	0	0	69	96