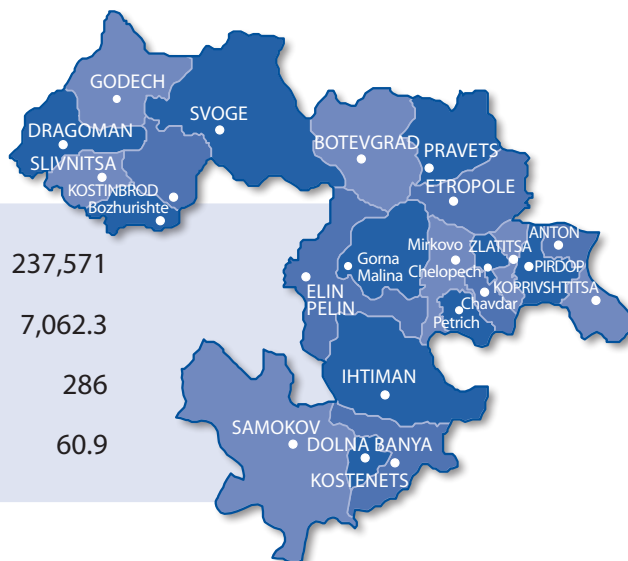


Sofia District

- Population (2015)
- Area (sq. km)
- Number of settlements
- Share of urban population (%)

237,571
7,062.3
286
60.9



Overview

Salaries in the district of Sofia have been close to national average levels but total income levels have remained low due to the continuing stagnation of the labor market. Investment activity rose in 2015, and the EU funds utilized so far by municipalities in the district have surpassed average levels by a wide margin. Infrastructure is well developed but road surface quality is worse than elsewhere in the country. In 2015, 15 municipalities continued to have no cadastral map coverage, and transparency ratings for local authorities have remained among the lowest in the country. The age structure of the district's population keeps dete-

riorating despite the positive net migration rate in 2015. Matriculation exam results are going down, which raises concern about education quality in the district. Though the number of both beds in hospitals and specialist doctors has been sufficient, there is a certain shortage of GPs. The workloads of criminal judges in the district's courts are strained, which entails a higher share of pending criminal cases. The population's connectivity to WTPPs remains relatively low. With the exception of the traditionally high interest in museums in some tourist municipalities, the district's cultural development is lagging behind.

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 ●●●

The annual average GDP per capita reached 11,544 BGN in 2014, the fourth highest value after the capital and the districts of Stara Zagora and Varna. The average annual gross salary was close to the country average, but due to the relatively low employment, the average annual income per household member remained low – 3,827 BGN per capita (vs. 4,953 BGN per capita nationally) in 2015. Salaries accounted for 48% of total income (vs. 57% nationally), while pensions accounted for 36% (vs. 27% on average in Bulgaria). This is one of the reasons for the relatively unfavorable indicators for living conditions and social inclusion in the district. The share of the population living below the national poverty line reached 24.6% vs. the national level of 21.8%. 42.9% of the population lived in material deprivation (vs. 33.1% in the country).

Labor Market ●●●

Sofia is one of the districts where no clear signs of labor market recovery have been noticeable. The employment rate in 2015 was 59.2%, way below its value registered before the crisis affected labor markets (67.9% in 2009). In 2015, the unemployment rate dropped to 9.4% but remained above the average value for the country (9.1%), and economic activity dropped to 65.5% (vs. 69.3% on average in the country).

The educational profile of the workforce is unfavorable. 16.8% of the population aged 25 to 64 has higher education (vs. 27.8% in the country). The share of people with primary or lower education is 21.9% (vs. the national average level of 18.1%).

Investment ●●●●

Because of its immediate proximity to the capital, Sofia district is among those most attractive for foreign investors. As of the end of 2014, FDI amounted to 1.24 bln euro, or below the peak of 2012 by about 84 m. Regardless of this drop, foreign investment in the district retained its second highest place relative to the population: 5,216 euro per capita (vs. the national average of 3,006 euro per capita).

In 2014, there was a visible increase in company investment in FTA. Relative to the population, it reached its highest level since 2008: 2,353 BGN per capita (vs. 2,786 BGN on average for the country).

Municipalities in Sofia district achieved the sixth highest rate of EU fund utilization as beneficiaries of operational programs. As of the end of May 2016, they had absorbed a total of 229 m BGN or 965 BGN per capita, where the national average rate was 688 BGN per capita. Nevertheless, during the last one and a half year, the district has utilized no funds at all and has even been the single district which reported a drop in absorption levels (probably due to corrections). The highest utilization rate was achieved in the

municipalities of Kostinbrod (4,295 BGN per capita) and Pirdop (4,284 BGN per capita), while the lowest was in Svoge (104 BGN per capita).

Infrastructure ●●●

The density of the road (21.3 km per 100 sq. km) and railway (4.2 km per 100 sq. km) networks is higher than the respective national averages of 17.8 and 3.6 km per 100 sq. km. A higher share of motorways and first class roads than that in Sofia district (32.8%) is only to be found in Shumen (36.0%). Despite the good coverage of the district's territory with roads, the share of road surfaces in good condition continues to be relatively low – 29.0% in 2015 vs. 40.7% in the country.

At the same time, Sofia is among the districts with the lowest share of households with internet access (45.9% in 2015 when the average was 59.1%). Lower levels have only been observed in the districts of Vratsa, Montana, Sliven, and Targovishte. Internet usage in 2015 was also below average: 57.8% of the population between 16 and 74 used the internet vs. 60.3% nationally.

Taxes and Fees ●●●

Although tax burden in the district's municipalities has stayed close to the average national levels, it has been rising gradually. Seven changes in key local taxes and fees were registered in 2016, five of which included higher values. The tax which was changed most drastically was the vehicle tax; three of the four registered changes included raising the previous rates. Yes, both vehicle tax and the license tax for retailers have not surpassed average national levels.

The local tax on the sale of immovable property and the immovable property tax for legal entities are higher than national average levels. The district also has the fifth largest waste collection fee for properties of legal entities.

Administration ●●

Cadastral coverage in Sofia district increased in 2015 to reach 14.6%, but there are still 15 municipalities with no coverage at all.

Samokov and Svoge are the only municipalities in Sofia district to have reached an above-average active transparency rating from the AIP Foundation. The average rating for the district's municipalities was 41.3% (vs. 54.3% nationally); lower average ratings were given only to the districts of Shumen, Pernik, Kardzhali, and Vidin. In administrative services, a relatively good level has been achieved in one-stop shop services, while the development of electronic services remains below the national average level.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●

Demography ●●●

Sofia district registered its highest net migration rate (5.5‰) in 2015. This was the highest value for the entire country. Most settlers in the district – over 3,000 people – came from the capital.

Nevertheless, the overall demographic state in the district continued to deteriorate in 2015, especially as far as the population's age structure was concerned. The age dependence ratio for that year (the ratio between people over 65 and those aged 0 to 14) reached 167.5% (vs. 146.4% for the country). That trend influenced the natural growth rate, which was –9.7‰ in 2015 (vs. –6.2‰ nationally).

Education ●

The quality of school education declined quickly in the district of Sofia in the last few years. Until 2013, high school leavers attained better results at the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature than the average for the country. In the next three years, however, grades got worse and in 2016, the district registered the third highest share of failing grades – 16.0% or almost twice the national average share. Stricter control on the exam's administration this year is a possible explanation. A high share of high school repeaters is also typical of the district. In 2015, it reached 1.8% vs. 1.0% on average for Bulgaria. Among the few positive features of school education is the relatively high percentage of enrollment in 5th–8th grade. It rose in 2015 to reach 79.5%, which is more than the national coverage by 1 pp.

The proximity to the capital's established universities has limited to a certain extent the possibilities for the development of higher education in the district. In 2015, there were 4,259 students in colleges and universities in the district, the smallest number since 2007.

Healthcare ●●●

The development of healthcare in the district is similar to that in the country. The ratio between beds in general hospitals and the local population reached 5.1 beds per 1,000 people in 2015 (vs. 4.6 beds per 1,000 people on average nationally). The population's morbidity, however, was above average. In 2015, there were 260 patients hospitalized per 1,000 people while the national average was 232 patients per 1,000 people. Despite (or maybe because of) the capital's proximity, there is a sufficient number of doctors. During the last year, though, the ratio of general practitioners to the local population deteriorated. In 2015, it reached 1,786 people per doctor (vs. 1,619 people per doctor on average in the country).

In 2015, 87.3% of the district's population was health-insured, which was slightly below the national average rate of 88.5%.

Security and Justice ●●

Between 2013 and 2015 the workloads of judges in the district court grew from 6.9 to 9.7 cases per month, while the national average remained slightly over 8 cases per month. The bigger workloads entailed a growing number of pending criminal cases which reached 12.1% in 2015 (vs. 9.4% on average for the country). The share of cases closed within three months, however, approached the national average, reaching 89.0% in 2015.

After going up in 2010 and 2011, the district's crime rate gradually went down to reach a level close to the national average. In 2015, the clearance crime rate was 39.7% – close to the average level of 39.2% for Bulgaria.

Environment ●

In 2015, Sofia district had the third highest volume of generated household waste per capita: 568 kg per person (vs. 442 kg per person on average in the country). Higher rates were registered only in Burgas and Ruse. Though 77.1% of the population lives in areas with public sewerage systems, only 29.3% of the population were connected to WWTPs in 2014, a share two times lower than the national average.

The air is relatively clean in the district. In 2014, the level of carbon dioxide emissions amounted to 39.5 t/sq. km (vs. 314.5 t/sq. km on average in Bulgaria).

Culture ●

In Sofia district there are neither theaters nor libraries large enough to be included in the annual monitoring of the NSI. Between 2013 and 2015 cinemas in the district registered about 14,000 to 15,000 visits annually. Relative to the population, that made a little over 60 visits per 1,000 people in 2015 (vs. 744 per 1,000 people nationally).

Only the local museums enjoyed an above-average visit rate thanks to tourist municipalities like Koprivshtitsa. In 2015, there were 1,491 visits per 1,000 people, which is the third highest level of museum visits after the districts of Gabrovo and Veliko Tarnovo.

Key Indicators for the District of Sofia

Indicators of economic development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,008	12,021	12,286	10,978	11,544	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,201	3,156	3,523	3,563	3,771	3,827
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	7,749	8,360	8,926	9,252	9,766	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	21.4	19.0	24.5	24.6	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	68.0	66.1	63.7	66.3	68.4	65.5
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	62.5	59.6	59.6	59.5	59.6	59.2
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	7.8	9.7	6.4	10.0	12.7	9.4
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	13.1	15.3	15.0	14.4	15.8	16.8
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	37	37	37	38	39	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	2,174	1,971	2,338	1,836	2,353	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	5,243	5,253	5,413	5,274	5,216	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	33.4	48.7	49.2	44.1	45.9	45.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	30.7	36.2	36.0	28.6	31.0	29.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	11.6	12.4	12.4	12.4	12.6	14.8

Indicators of social development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-8.0	-8.3	-8.5	-8.2	-9.1	-9.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-2.1	0.1	-1.2	-1.6	-2.7	5.5
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.7	4.8	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.1
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	1.9	1.5	2.1	2.2	5.0	10.7
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	81.6	81.5	80.6	79.7	78.9	79.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	85.4	86.0	85.4	84.8	86.0	87.3
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	230	241	246	252	249	260
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	20.9	18.3	15.2	15.9	14.7	13.8
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	37.4	37.6	40.5	35.5	39.1	39.7
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	6.4	12.0	10.9	9.2	10.5	12.1
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTP (%)	28.8	28.2	29.1	29.3	29.3	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/km ²)	17.6	21.1	20.5	41.7	39.5	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	17	20	35	62	63	61
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	0	0	0	0	0	0