Kyustendil District

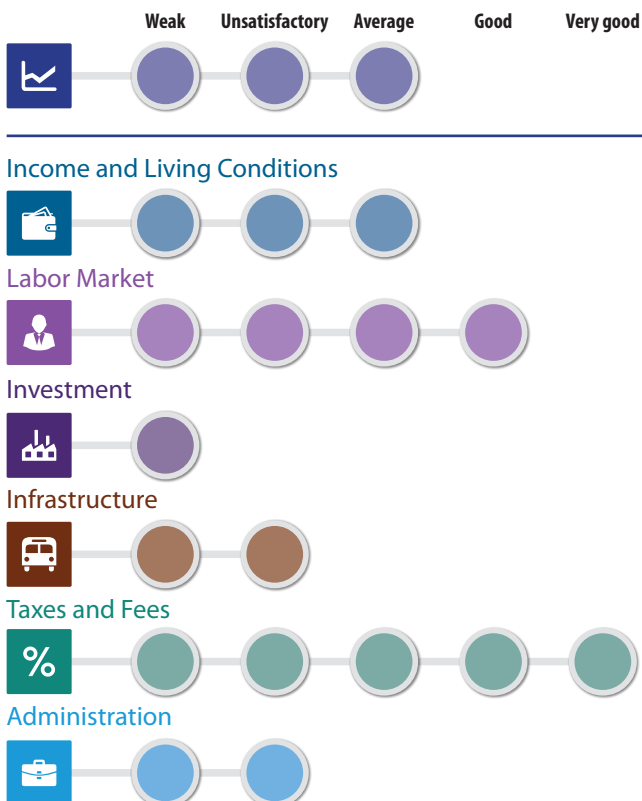|	
▶ Population (2016)	124,723
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,051.5
▶ Number of settlements	183
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.3

Overview

Kyustendil's economy has been on the rise in recent years though incomes and salaries have been lagging behind national average levels. The labor market has shown some positive tendencies while population ageing and depopulation have been a negative influence. Both local and foreign investment in the district has been relatively low while EU funds have been relatively poorly utilized. Local administration performance and the availability of its services have retained an unsatisfactory level despite the considerably lower local taxes and fees compared with the national average level.
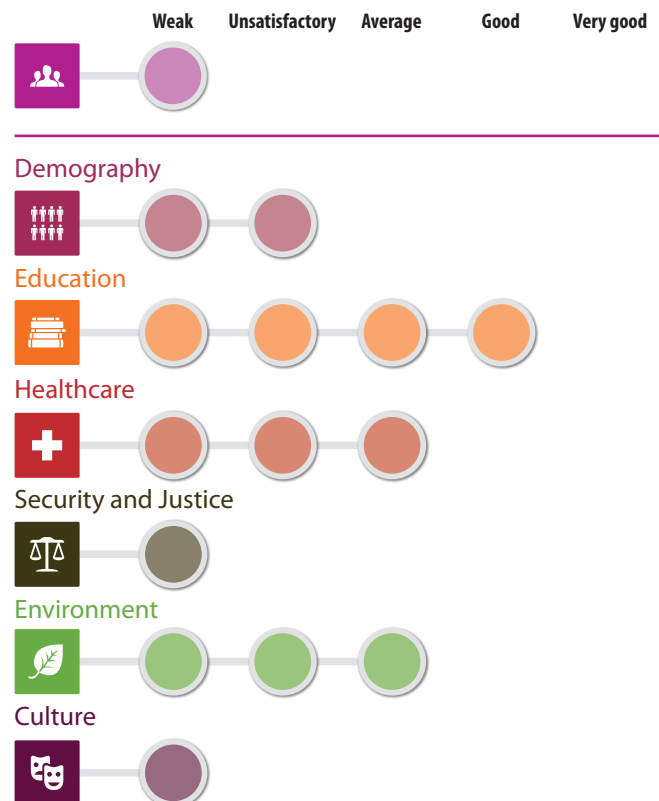
Population ageing and depopulation have been particularly intensive in the district in the last few years. High school students' matriculation results have been improving while still remaining below the national average rates. Local courts have had traditionally high workloads and that has affected the speed of justice administration. Air pollution continues to be a problem in the district. Cultural life has a relatively low intensity.

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 ●●●

Since the crisis Kyustendil has been lagging behind the economic development in the country. Though in the last few years GDP per capita in the district kept growing, its size (7,274 BGN/person) was still far below the national value of 12,339 BGN/person in 2015. There was a considerable difference in income too: in 2015 the average annual salary in the district reached 7,486 BGN, way below the national average of 10,535 BGN while income per household member in 2016 was 4,555 BGN or lower than average by 12%.

The share of population living in material deprivation as well as those living below the poverty line increased in 2015 but remained beneath the national average.

Labor Market ●●●●

In 2016 economic activity in the district kept on growing for the third year in a row to reach 69.9% and overtake the national average of 68.7%. This tendency was accompanied by rising employment and falling unemployment: a reflection of economic recovery in the district. Employment experienced a stable growth and managed to settle at a level of 64.1% – higher than the national average of 63.4% for the first time in the last five years. Unemployment, on the other hand, shrank fast though it kept its above-average level.

The educational structure of the population aged 25–64 also improved. In 2016 the share of university graduates increased to almost 25%: still lower than the national average of 28%. The share of people with primary or lower education on its part dropped to 12%, and remained below the national average of 18%.

In 2016 the district of Kyustendil was still one of the three districts, the other two being Gabrovo and Smolyan, with the least favorable demographic replacement ratio of 48.5%. The implication was that for every 100 people about to leave the labor market in the coming few years there were 49 young people ready to join the workforce.

Investment ●

In 2015 the number of working enterprises in the district as well as FTA acquisition expenditures in it relative to the population increased considerably, though both remained far below national average levels. Foreign investment relative to the population in Kyustendil was still almost ten times lower than the national average value and that difference increased in 2015.

As of 30th June 2017 Kyustendil was once again the district with the smallest sums paid from operational programs to local beneficiaries (614 BGN/person vs. 1,344 BGN/person

on average nationally). The municipality that utilized most EU funds in the district was Rila with 6,154 BGN/person, because of the construction works on the "Struma" highway. That made it the municipality with the highest utilization of EU funds in the country.

Infrastructure ●●

In 2015 road density in the district increased to 20.5 km/100 sq. km (vs. 18.6 km/100 sq. km nationally) parallel to the increased share (to 20.3% vs. 18.6% nationally) of highways and first class roads – all accounted primarily by the construction process of the Struma highway. This also entailed an increased share of road surfaces with good quality in 2015 and 2016 to reach 52.8% in 2016 when the national average rate was 41.5%.

The share of households with Internet access in the district increased in 2016 as well, though it was still below the national average level. The share of local people who used the Internet was also relatively low.

Taxes and Fees ●●●●●

In 2017 Kyustendil was the district with the lowest taxes and fees. Their average levels in all municipalities for all rates monitored in the study were below the national average. What is more, they had not increased for the last five years in the district while the same period witnessed a stable increase in the country as a whole.

The municipalities in the district (alongside the districts of Vidin, Dobrich, and Pazardzhik) also kept the lowest rate for the tax for taxi transport: 300 BGN while the national average was 525 BGN.

Administration ●●

The performance of Kyustendil in this category has been unsatisfactory. In 2009 the district was ahead of other districts in its share of territory covered by cadastral maps. Between 2009 and 2016 coverage failed to rise, retaining its rate of 18.6% while in the rest of the country it reached 22.5%. The municipalities of Boboshevo, Kocherinovo, Nevestino, and Treklyano went on having 0% coverage.

The active transparency rating of local government in the district's municipalities rose in 2017. However, municipalities in other districts reported a much faster improvement and Kyustendil remained the district with the lowest transparency: 43% vs. 59% nationally.

The rating for the development of electronic government and one-stop shop services availability were comparable with the respective national average values.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Kystendil's demographic tendencies ranked it last but one in the country (before Vidin district) in this category.

In recent years, population ageing and depopulation have intensified in the district. In 2016 the age dependency ratio as the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 reached 222% while the national average rate was 147%. The natural increase rate kept dropping to reach its lowest level in the district and the third lowest in the country (−13‰ vs. −6‰ nationally in 2016). The net migration rate also dropped to reach almost −8‰.

The urban population in the district has retained a level of about 69% in recent years whereas population density has been shrinking.

Education

The net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade (81%) in Kyustendil increased faster once again in 2016 than it did in the rest of the country (78%). The share of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education was also relatively low.

At the same time, matriculation exam results improved in the district but stayed worse than national average grades. The district average grade at the matriculation exam in BLL was 4.12 while the national average was 4.22; poor grades were 9% (vs. less than 8% nationally).

There is no university in the district but it is situated between two of the leading centers of higher education in the country – the capital and Blagoevgrad.

Healthcare

Kyustendil is still one of the districts with the highest share of health-insured people due to a considerable extent to the fast ageing population and the fact that the state provides health insurance for pensioners. In 2016 that share reached 95.2% while the national average was 88.1%. Both the number of GPs and that of specialists relative to the population were similar to those in other districts. The number of beds in general hospitals as well as hospitalization numbers were similar to those in other districts for 2016.

The infant mortality rate in the district increased in 2016 to reach a level of 12.6%, almost two times higher than the national average level of 6.5%.

Security and Justice

The district performed poorly in this category. Traditionally, district court workloads have been above national average, which has affected the speed of justice administration. In 2016 a criminal judge in the district court saw 10.4 cases a month (vs. 9.4 on average in the country). Criminal cases closed within 3 months in the district increased to 85% but remained below the national average of 89%. Pending cases dropped to 9% (vs. 8% nationally).

Crime rates remained above average in Kyustendil. Yet, the number of crimes against the person and property dropped in 2016 while their clearance rate rose to 44% of those registered during the year – below the national average rate of 48%.

Environment

The share of people in the district of Kyustendil with access to sewerage systems as well as those with access to wastewater treatment plants increased in 2015, approaching national average rates. The share of people with access to sewerage reached 75.1% (vs. 75.5% nationally) and those with access to wastewater treatment plants reached 61.9% (vs. 62.3% nationally).

Generated household waste (421 kg/person) was also close to the national average level of 422 kg/person annually in 2015.

Air pollution continues to be a problem in the district. In 2015 for another successive year the registered carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere were 669 t/sq. km or twice the national average of 324 t/sq. km. Only the districts of Stara Zagora, Sofia (capital city) and Varna had higher rates.

Culture

In 2016 museums in the district yet again attracted a comparatively large number of people and visits increased to 889 per 1,000 people (vs. 734 per 1,000 people nationally). Interest in local cinemas rose again after a drop in 2015 but was still considerably below national average rates. In 2016 there were 217 visits per 1,000 people (vs. 778 nationally).

After a few years of increase, in 2016 theater visits in the district experienced a drop to their 2012 level, while the difference from other districts increased considerably: 112 per 1,000 people in Kyustendil vs. 322 per 1,000 people nationally.

Visits to local libraries also increased as a whole but their rates, too, remained below national average ones.

Key Indicators for the District of Kyustendil

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,178	6,130	6,234	6,683	7,274	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,534	3,508	3,593	3,966	4,587	4,555
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,219	6,444	6,880	7,091	7,486	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	28.2	16.1	8.5	14.0	17.4	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	68.5	67.6	67.6	66.9	69.2	69.9
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	58.1	57.9	57.4	57.4	60.2	64.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	14.9	14.2	14.9	14.2	13.1	8.2
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	20.7	19.4	22.5	23.7	23.7	24.8
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	39	39	40	41	44	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	592	754	1,055	1,076	1,280	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	190	247	295	337	337	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	35.2	31.7	52.4	39.9	50.3	55.4
Share of roads in good condition (%)	49.8	50.0	46.4	46.4	50.5	52.8
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−10.8	−11.5	−11.4	−11.4	−12.2	−13.0
Net migration rate (‰)	−3.2	−4.9	−7.6	−6.7	−3.2	−7.8
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.40	4.19	4.28	4.30	4.07	3.97
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	5.21	8.00	5.19	3.98	10.03	12.48
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	81.3	80.4	78.6	78.3	79.3	81.1
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	91.8	91.3	90.5	92.1	94.2	95.2
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	160.3	231.0	238.4	165.3	232.6	227.4
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	16.0	15.8	16.1	15.8	15.8	14.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	35.6	38.4	32.6	29.8	34.4	44.2
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	9.4	10.3	10.6	9.5	9.8	9.2
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	60.3	60.6	60.8	61.0	61.9	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	739.8	690.0	668.9	668.9	668.9	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	132	86	68	201	187	217
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	108	114	139	146	155	112