

Pazardzhik District

▶ Population (2016)	262,222
▶ Area (sq. km)	4,456.9
▶ Number of settlements	117
▶ Share of urban population (%)	62.5



Overview

In 2015 the GDP increase in the district was twice the country average; yet, welfare in Pazardzhik was considerably below national average levels. The labor market indicators were comparable to the national average rates but the population's relatively unfavorable educational structure was retained. Investment activity kept lagging in the district of Pazardzhik. Despite the relatively low share of highways and first class roads, road quality remained high.

Population ageing and depopulation are less clearly expressed in Pazardzhik district than they are in the country as a whole. Education indicators place the district among those with the poorest results both in quality and in the ability to keep children in schools. The relatively numerous hospital beds and doctors in the district determine the great number of hospitalizations. Administration of justice is relatively speedy while registered crime rates are low. Cultural life remains unintensified except for the high interest in museums.

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 GDP per capita registered an increase which interrupted the downward trend from the previous two years. The increase was even over twice the country average; yet Pazardzhik remained considerably below the national average figures with 7,929 BGN/person while the national average rate was 12,339 BGN/person.

The average salary in the district kept rising in 2015 to reach over 8,000 BGN a year but it, too, remained below the national average salary of 10,500 BGN. In 2016, the annual average income per household member increased for a second consecutive year to a value over 4,000 BGN but it was already above 5,000 BGN in the country.

The district's inability to catch up with incomes and salaries determined the relatively high number of the poor and those living in material deprivation, though the values of both indicators dropped in 2015.

Labor Market ●●●

In 2016 economic activity in Pazardzhik kept its 2015 level, whereas it shrank in the country as a whole. Yet, it remained below the national level of 68.7% with its 65.3%. Employment also remained low in the district: 60.2% (vs. 63.4% nationally), still unable to reach its pre-crisis level of 63.1% from 2008.

However, unemployment in the district kept decreasing and in 2016 it was below or similar to the national average value of 7.7%.

The population's educational structure was still relatively unfavorable between ages 25 and 64 though in 2016 there was some improvement. The share of people with higher education in the district rose by two p.p. to reach 18.8% (vs. 27.7% nationally) while the share of people with primary or lower education shrank by 1 p.p. to 25.7% (vs. 17.7% nationally).

Investment ●●

Investment activity in the district kept lagging in 2015. Though foreign investment went up to reach 1,855 euro in 2015, it remained considerably below the national cumulative average of 3,250 euro/person. Utilized EU funds from operational programs in the district – 782 BGN/person – were almost two times lower than the national average level of 1,344 BGN/person as of 30th June 2017. The greatest sums were paid to beneficiaries from the municipality of Panagyurishte and the smallest to those from Sarnitsa and Rakitovo.

Entrepreneurial initiative in the district intensified in 2015. The number of enterprises reached 42 per 1,000 people

(vs. 55 per 1,000 people nationally). FTA acquisition expenditures also increased, though at a relatively slow pace, having in mind the low base and the lag from the national average levels. They went up to 1,659 BGN in 2015 (vs. 2,973 BGN nationally).

Infrastructure ●●●

Road and railroad density in the district of Pazardzhik are comparable to the national average. The share of highways and first class roads, 15%, was lower than the national average of 19% in 2015 though the road surface quality remained relatively high. In 2016, 47% of the road surface was in good quality (vs. 42% nationally).

Internet access and usage by the local population rose in 2016 but remained below national average levels.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●

Local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities remained unchanged in 2017. While the average rates of the property transfer tax and the waste collection fee were relatively high, the immovable property tax, vehicle tax and license tax for retail trade were lower than the respective average rates in the country.

The tax on taxi transport was one of the lowest in the country. All municipalities in the district, which collected this kind of tax, had a rate of 300 BGN in 2017 when the national average was 525 BGN.

Administration ●●

In 2017 the administration's evaluation for the development of electronic government and the accessibility of one-stop shop services of the district's municipalities fell and remained below national average values.

The transparency rating of the district's municipalities, on the other hand, rose to approach the national average. The most transparent municipality in the district is Panagyurishte with a rating of 70%, whereas the least transparent ones are Sarnitsa, Belovo, and Lesichovo (all below 40%).

Cadastral coverage was once again on the increase in 2016 (27%) reaching above the national average mark of 23%. The reason was the increased coverage in the Pazardzhik municipality. Coverage in the municipalities of Velingrad, Lesichovo, Septemvri, and Strelcha remained 0%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●

Demography ●●●●

Though Pazardzhik was following the overall national trend of population ageing and depopulation these processes were somewhat less conspicuous in the district. The district's age dependency ratio as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 was 134% in 2016 (vs. 147% nationally). The natural increase rate remained negative in 2015 and 2016, approaching the average national value of about –6‰. Between 2014 and 2016 the net migration rate retained its level of –4.9‰, which indicates that a greater part of people left the district than those settling in it.

Urban population retained a share of 63%, considerably lower than the 73% average for the country. Still, because of the great number of small settlements with significant population, the density in the district was high – 2,159 people/sq. km (vs. 1,548 people/sq. km in the country as a whole).

Education ●

In this category, indicators place Pazardzhik among the districts with the poorest education. The enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade shrank again in 2016 to a level below the national average. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were considerably higher, the share of dropouts rising quickly in the last few years to a level close to the highest in the country: almost 5% in 2015.

Average grades at the matriculation exams in BLL dropped in 2017 compared with the previous year, thus increasing the difference from the national average grade. Poor grades also increased in 2017 to a number almost twice the national average: over 15% vs. below 8% nationally. Only the districts of Kardzhali and Yambol – with more than 20% each – had higher shares of fail grades.

The district is one of the few without any universities or their branches located in them.

Healthcare ●●●

The share of health-insured people in the district – 85.2% – was below the national average of 88.1% in 2016. Access to doctors remained close to average. In 2016, there were 1,610 people per GP (vs. 1,611 on average in the country) and 577 people per specialist (vs. 530 nationally).

The number of beds in local hospitals remained above the national average and its increase overtook the national rate in 2016. Hospital beds in the district reached 6.6 per 1,000 people (vs. 5.1 per 1,000 people nationally).

The relatively large number of hospital beds and the relatively high number of doctors in the district determined

the high number of hospitalizations: 276 per 1,000 people in 2016 (vs. 135 per 1,000 people nationally).

Security and Justice ●●●

Though this was the second year in a row when courts' workloads increased in Pazardzhik to reach above national average levels, administration of justice was relatively speedy. In 2016 a criminal judge saw an average of 12 cases a month (vs. 9 cases a month on average for the country). The share of criminal cases in the district to be closed within 3 months remained at 93% for the third year in a row (vs. 89% in the country) in 2016. At the same time, the share of pending cases shrank once again to reach 5% (vs. 8% for the country).

Registered crime rates have traditionally been low in the district. In 2016 registered crimes against the person and property dropped for the third year in a row to reach 9.9 per 1,000 people (vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people in the country). The crime clearance rate rose to 55% (vs. 48% nationally).

Environment ●●●

The relatively poor urbanization in the district has been the reason for the poor availability of sewerage systems. The newly built wastewater treatment plant in the town of Septemvri was launched in 2015 and the share of people with access to sewerage connected to wastewater treatment increased from 27 to 44%, but was still considerably below the national average level of 62% in 2015.

Pazardzhik remained one of the districts with relatively clean air. Carbon dioxide emissions per sq. km of its territory were ten times lower compared to the country's average levels. Generated waste in the district was comparable with the national average.

Culture ●

Pazardzhik is one of the districts with a relatively low intensity of cultural life. Nevertheless, interest in local museums increased for the second year in a row to overtake national average levels for the first time since 2012, registering 783 visits per 1,000 people (vs. 734 nationally) in 2016. The number of visits to local theaters also went up in 2016 to reach 237 per 1,000 people (vs. 322 nationally).

The rate of library visits, however, experienced a sharp decline in 2016 to a level five times lower than the national average.

Key Indicators for the District of Pazardzhik

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,169	7,567	7,281	6,864	7,929	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,972	3,460	3,755	3,570	3,728	4,229
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,368	6,862	7,264	7,650	8,006	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	38.8	45.5	50.2	46.6	43.3	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.1	64.2	64.5	66.6	65.3	65.3
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	54.0	52.4	56.0	59.6	59.7	60.2
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	18.1	18.3	13.0	10.4	8.6	7.7
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	16.9	16.8	16.6	15.3	16.8	18.8
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	38	39	39	39	42	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,236	1,265	1,227	1,512	1,659	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,446	1,581	1,702	1,762	1,855	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	38.7	40.4	36.1	49.6	50.6	60.7
Share of roads in good condition (%)	43.0	44.0	52.6	49.8	51.8	47.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	19.4	25.1	25.1	26.8	26.8	27.1

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-4.6	-4.5	-4.2	-5.3	-6.1	-5.8
Net migration rate (‰)	-2.5	-3.2	-4.7	-4.9	-4.9	-4.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.35	4.10	4.13	4.24	4.21	4.01
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	4.55	6.78	6.88	5.82	6.57	14.56
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	83.1	82.5	78.1	78.9	78.7	77.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	84.4	83.4	82.6	83.6	85.5	85.2
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	135.4	265.0	279.3	152.6	265.8	276.1
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.9	9.7	10.5	10.2	10.1	9.9
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	41.6	38.2	39.3	41.8	46.0	55.4
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	2.2	7.9	6.9	9.8	6.9	5.1
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	26.1	27.2	27.3	27.4	44.3	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	71.6	48.7	37.9	35.5	32.5	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	98	86	123	163	154	237