Smolyan District

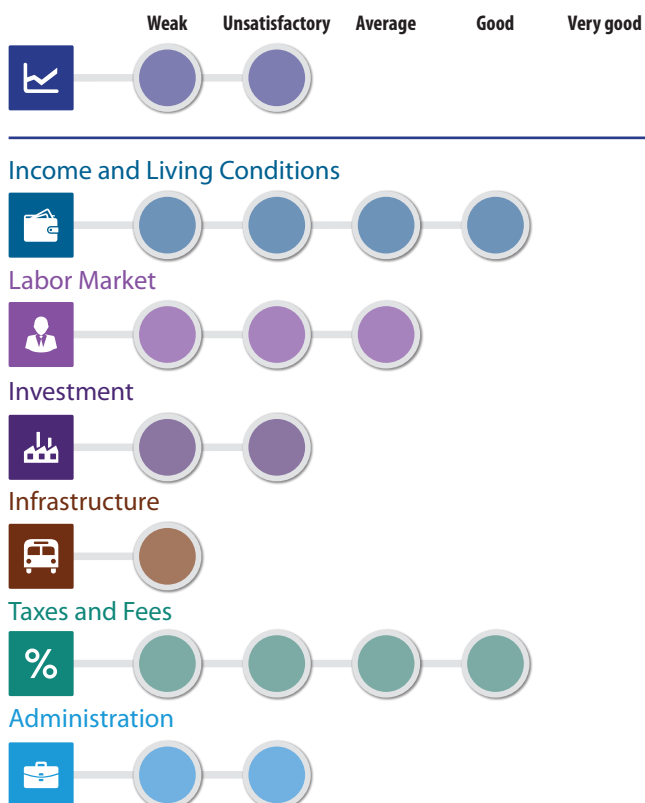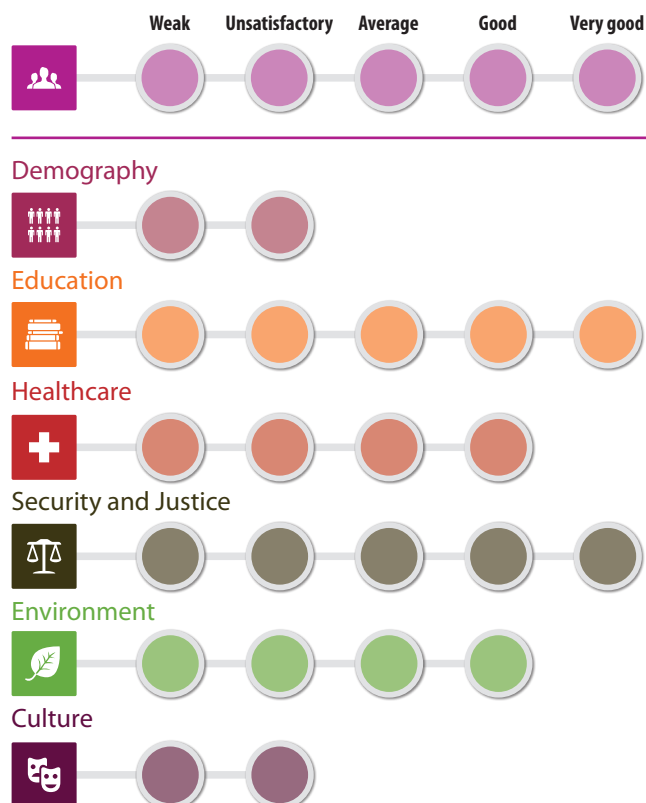|	
▸ Population (2016)	110,513
▸ Area (sq. km)	3,192.8
▸ Number of settlements	242
▸ Share of urban population (%)	55.7

Overview

After several years of hesitant growth in GDP, accompanied by shrinkages, in 2015 Smolyan district registered the second successive year of growth. Salaries also continued to grow but remained considerably below average. Smolyan reached the top three districts in population economic activity. Investment activity in the district remained relatively low. Because of the predominantly mountainous relief of the territory infrastructural development was limited. The main local taxes and fees in the municipalities of Smolyan were close to or lower than the respective national average levels.

In 2016, Smolyan was once again the district with the highest net number of people moving out relative to the population. It was the absolute first in education. The relative number of specialist doctors was lagging behind. Smolyan was the district with the smallest number of registered crimes and the highest clearance rate. Its relatively low urbanization accounts for the low share of population with access to sewerage. Cultural life in the district was not characterized by particular intensity. In 2016 the interest in libraries made an exception.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

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

Labor Market
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Investment
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Infrastructure
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●				

Taxes and Fees
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Administration
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	●

Demography
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Education
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	●

Healthcare
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Security and Justice
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	●

Environment
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Culture
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

📉 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

👛 Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

After several years of hesitant growth, accompanied by downturns, in 2015 the district of Smolyan registered a rise in GDP per capita for the second successive year, reaching 8,557 BGN (vs. 12,339 BGN nationally). Salaries also kept growing to reach 7,679 BGN though they remained lower than the national average of 10,535 BGN.

The stable upward trend in incomes was retained in 2016 as well, when incomes in the district (5,618 BGN/household member) remained above the national average level of 5,167 BGN/household member.

The rise in salaries and incomes in the district explains the improved living conditions in it. The share of population living in material deprivation as well as that living below the national poverty line declined considerably though they remained above national average levels in 2015.

👤 Labor Market ●●●

Economic activity in the district declined in 2016 and Smolyan lost its first place, though it remained one of the top three (after the capital and Shumen) districts with highest rates of labor market participation reaching 74.1% when the national average rate was 68.7%. The decline in economic activity, however, was accompanied by both declining unemployment and shrinking employment. Still, employment (63.6%) remained higher than the national average rate of 63.4%. Unemployment on its part (14.1%), despite the decline, was still almost twice the national rate of 7.7%.

University graduates in the district were 23.2% of the population aged 25–64 (vs. 27.7% nationally) and the people with primary or lower education were 18.9% (vs. 17.7% nationally).

The fast ageing of the population remained problematic for the labor market. In 2016 the district once again had the lowest ratio of demographic replacement: 43.9% (vs. 62.8% nationally). The implication is that for every 100 people aged 60–64 leaving the district's workforce there were only 44 people aged 15–19 about to join it.

🏭 Investment ●●

Investment activity in Smolyan district remained relatively low. Both enterprise numbers and investment in FTA rose in 2015 though remaining considerably below national average levels relative to the population. FDI was about four times lower than the national average level relative to the population. As of the end of 2015 it reached 83 m euro or 752 euro/person in the district (vs. 3,250 euro/person nationally).

Utilization of EU funds was also relatively low. As of 30th June 2017 the sums paid from operational programs to beneficiaries in the district amounted to 971 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person nationally). Most funds were utilized by the municipality of Rudozem (over 1,500 BGN/person).

🚌 Infrastructure ●

Infrastructural development of the territory is limited on account of its mountainous character. Smolyan is the district where there are neither railroads, nor highways or first class roads passing through. Still, the quality of road surfaces is better than the national average level. In 2016 the share of road surfaces in good condition was 55.5% in the district while it was 41.5% on average in the country.

Access to and usage of the Internet also remained below average. In 2016, 60% of households had Internet access (vs. 64% in the country) and the share of people who had used it in the previous 12 months remained at 56% (vs. 63% in the country).

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●

Most basic local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities were close to or lower than the national average levels in 2017. The most significant difference was registered in the annual license tax for retailers though the Devin municipality raised its rate. The municipalities of Devin, Madan and Nedelino, on the other hand, raised the tax on immovable property of legal entities and the average rate of this tax remained the only one above the national average level.

On the whole, 2017 witnessed the greatest number of rising tax rates by municipalities compared with previous five years.

💼 Administration ●●

The administration's self-evaluation for development of electronic government and provided one-stop shop services in 2017 remained below national average levels. The transparency rating of local administrations that year was also considerably lower: 47% (vs. 59% in the country). The lowest rating was that of the Rudozem municipality (under 30%) while the highest ratings were in the municipalities of Zlatograd and Dospat (over 70% each).

Cadastral map coverage in the district continued to be above average: 32.1% of the territory (vs. 22.5% nationally) but this was the fifth year in a row without any development. In the municipality of Nedelino no part of the territory has been included in cadastral the map yet.

⚌ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

▦ Demography ●●

In 2016 Smolyan was once again the district with the greatest number of people moving out relative to the population. The net migration rate was almost −12‰. The natural increase rate was also below the national average at −8‰ (vs. −6‰ nationally). The fact that these indicators retained low levels for years made Smolyan one of the fastest ageing districts in the country. In 2016 the ratio of age dependency as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 rose to 192% (vs. 147% nationally).

Smolyan continued to be one of the districts with a relatively small share of urban population: in 2016, 56% of its inhabitants lived in urban areas (vs. 73% in the country).

▤ Education ●●●●●

The good condition of education in the district has traditionally ranked it among the leaders in the country but in this year's edition Smolyan is the absolute winner. In 2016 the number of repeaters was the lowest in the country: 0.08% (vs. 1.09% in the country). The lowest share was also registered in dropouts from primary and secondary education: 0.74% vs. 2.96% nationally. The same holds true of the relative number of teachers: 106 per 1,000 students (vs. 75 per 1,000 students nationally).

Smolyan was the district with the best performance at the matriculation exams in 2017, stealing the first place from the capital. The impressive development of the educational system in the district during the last few years is due to the purposeful efforts for acknowledging the significance of the educational community, teacher qualification, extramural activities, and individual approach. At the matriculation exam in BLL the students from the district achieved an average grade of 4.42 vs. the national average at 4.22. The share of poor grades, on the other hand, was 3% vs. 8% for the country.

✚ Healthcare ●●●●

Smolyan continued to be one of the districts with the highest number of health-insured people: 95% while they were 88% for the country in 2016, the ageing population being an important factor in this high share. The relative number of GPs in the district was comparable with the national average but that of medical specialists remained below average. In 2016 there were 720 people per specialist (vs. 530 people per specialist in the country).

The number of beds in local hospitals increased further in 2016, almost reaching the national average rate. The infant mortality rate in the district rose but was still below average.

⚖ Security and Justice ●●●●●

This was the category where Smolyan registered its best performance in 2016. The district's indicators were better in both security and justice. The workloads of local judges were below average which resulted in relatively speedy justice. In 2016, 96% of criminal cases in the district were closed within 3 months (vs. 89% in the country) while the share of pending cases was 7.5% (vs. 8.3% nationally).

In 2016 Smolyan was the district with the smallest relative number of registered crimes and the highest crime clearance rate. Registered crimes against the person and property in the district were 5.6 per 1,000 people (vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people in the country). The share of cleared crimes rose to 74% (vs. 48% in the country).

✿ Environment ●●●●

The relatively low urbanization in the district comes as an explanation of the relatively small share of population with access to sewerage. In 2015, 71% of it were connected to public sewerage (vs. 76% in the country) and 42% had sewerage connected with wastewater treatment plants (vs. 62% nationally).

Air pollution in the district remained almost 100 times lower than the national average level which ranked the district first in clean air – carbon dioxide emissions were 3.6 t/sq. km (vs. 324 t/sq. km nationally). The amount of generated household waste was also considerably below national average levels: 328 kg/person annually (vs. 422 kg/person nationally).

♊ Culture ●●

Cultural life in Smolyan is not characterized by particular intensity. Interest in local libraries is an exception, probably due to the launching of a project for modernization and popularization of libraries in Bulgaria in three of the district's municipalities. Library visits rose from 194 to 1,344 per 1,000 people (vs. 605 per 1,000 people nationally).

In 2016, for the third successive year, the district registered visits to the working cinema in Smolyan but their relative number was still quite a few times lower than the national average: 150 per 1,000 people (vs. 778 per 1,000 people nationally).

Visits to local theaters and museums rose in 2016 but their number relative to the population remained over two times lower than the national average.

Key Indicators for the District of Smolyan

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,358	7,435	7,186	7,583	8,557	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,180	4,242	4,590	5,315	5,419	5,618
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,122	6,516	6,800	7,253	7,679	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	32.1	36.8	30.8	34.0	24.1	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.2	70.8	74.2	76.1	77.2	74.1
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	50.4	55.3	59.3	61.2	63.9	63.6
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	25.0	21.9	20.3	19.4	17.2	14.1
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	16.6	18.2	20.0	21.0	21.7	23.2
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	43	44	44	45	47	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,081	1,010	1,202	1,775	1,843	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	599	631	647	653	752	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	31.3	45.3	45.2	55.4	52.3	59.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	42.7	41.0	45.3	49.5	54.5	55.5
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−6.4	−6.7	−6.6	−7.8	−8.2	−8.0
Net migration rate (‰)	−5.4	−7.3	−14.7	−11.6	−12.9	−11.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.39	4.22	4.37	4.42	4.37	4.26
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	5.44	5.56	3.92	3.36	2.52	6.51
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	85.3	84.1	82.3	82.4	83.3	81.1
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	91.2	90.4	90.0	91.6	94.4	95.1
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	183.2	180.1	196.6	211.9	213.6	224.8
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	4.8	4.7	5.7	5.4	6.1	5.6
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	69.5	68.7	57.9	53.5	56.7	73.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	11.1	6.5	6.7	8.2	5.2	7.5
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	39.0	39.1	39.3	39.5	42.0	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	4.8	5.3	4.8	4.0	3.6	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0	0	0	139	153	150
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	1	0	0	69	96	122