Stara Zagora District

▶ Population (2016)	322,531
▶ Area (sq. km)	5,151.1
▶ Number of settlements	207
▶ Share of urban population (%)	72.0

(Map: GURKOVO, PAVEL BANYA, MAGLIZH, NIKOLAEVO, KAZANLAK, STARA ZAGORA, Bratya Daskalovi, CHIRPAN, Opan, RADNEVO, GALABOVO)
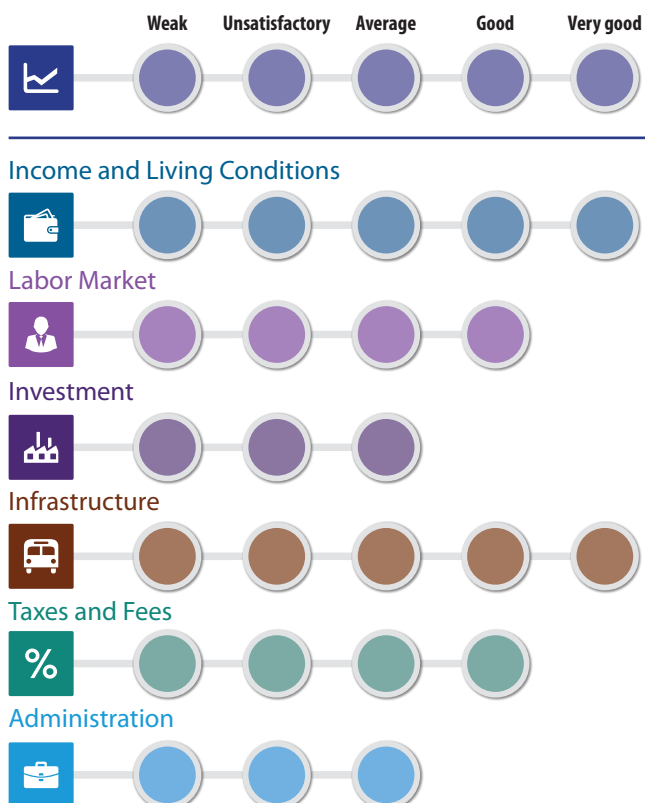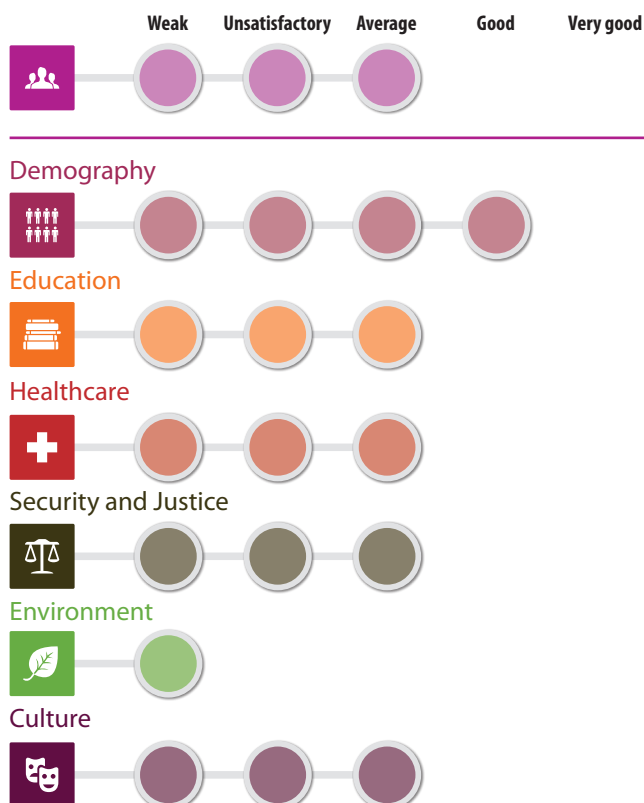
Overview

In 2015 GDP declined in the district (while it grew in the country) but kept its second place after the capital. Unemployment kept dropping to reach a level below the country average but the reason was mostly the population's lower economic activity. FDI continued growing in the district. The district's infrastructure got a high rating. The tax load is still relatively low. The development of e-services and one-stop shop services has made some progress though the administration's transparency is rated below national average.

Population ageing in the district has followed the general tendency in the country. Though Stara Zagora is one of the three districts where the shortage of teachers is most acute matriculation exam results are close to average. Considered against the background of the numerous doctors and hospital beds, hospitalizations are relatively few. Administration of justice is characterized by high workloads for judges and speedy trial. Air pollution in the district has continued to affect the district's environment rating. The intensity of cultural life is comparable with national average rates.

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 district's GDP per capita dropped in 2015 while it was rising in the country. Still, it kept its second place after the capital with 13,555 BGN/person compared to 12,339 BGN/person nationally. Despite its decline, incomes and salaries continued to go up in the district to reach rates close to the national average. Interestingly, in 2016, for the first time since the crisis set on, the annual average income per household member (5,151 BGN) was, though slightly, below the national average rate of 5,167 BGN.

The share of population living in material deprivation remained relatively high (38% in 2015 compared with the national average of 32%) but that of people living below the national poverty line (21%) was below the national average of 23%.

👤 Labor Market ●●●●

In 2016 the population's economic activity shrank, following the downward trend in the country. This mainly affected the district's unemployment. The employment rate reached 61.1% which was still below the national average of 63.4% but the unemployment rate dropped at a quicker pace than the average rate to reach 6.0% in 2016 when the national average rate was 7.7%.

The district's clearly expressed industrial profile predetermined the relatively high share of people aged 25–64 with secondary education. They were 67% (vs. 55% in the country). The share of university graduates (18.6%) in the district continued to be below the national average of 27.7% but that of people with primary or lower education (14.9%) was also lower than the national average of 17.7%.

🏭 Investment ●●●

As of the end of 2015, foreign investment in the district continued to grow and its size relative to the population was close to the national average: 3,173 euro/person and 3,250 euro/person respectively. Stara Zagora was thus one of the five districts where FDI reached over 3,000 euro/person. However, annual FTA expenditures slightly shrank at the same time, and remained below the national average level in 2015. The number of working enterprises also remained below the relative average number: 46 per 1,000 people (vs. 55 per 1,000 people in the country) in 2015.

The district was lagging behind in EU fund utilization. As of 30th June 2017 the sums paid to beneficiaries in the district from operational programs amounted to 1,067 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person in the country).

🚌 Infrastructure ●●●●●

The infrastructure in the district earned a high rating. The fact that the "Trakiya" highway passes through the district entails its high share of highways and first class roads: 29% vs. 19% nationally as well as the relatively high road quality: 56% of road surfaces in the district were in good condition (vs. 42% on average in the country) in 2016.

The district was also characterized by a relatively high density of its railroad network. Both Internet access (67% of households in the district vs. 64% in the country) and its usage (69% of district inhabitants vs. 63% in the country) remained above average in 2016.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●

Unlike the relatively high rates of local taxes and fees in economically developed districts, the tax load in Stara Zagora continued to be relatively low in 2017. The average rates of the municipal taxes on vehicles and retail trade were slightly above national average levels but the taxes on immovable property, property transfers, and taxis as well as the waste collection fee remained lower.

There was only one local tax raised in the district in 2017 – the Gurkovo municipality raised its immovable property tax. There was one tax lowered, too – in the Opan municipality where the vehicle tax was lowered.

💼 Administration ●●●

Stara Zagora was one of the few districts where cadastral coverage did not increase in 2016. The cadastral map included 15.7% of the district's territory (vs. 22.5% nationally) while three of its municipalities still had no territory included in the cadastral map (Bratya Daskalovi, Opan, and Chirpan).

In 2017 once again self-evaluation of local administrations for development of electronic government and availability of one-stop shop services was still above average. The transparency rating of the administration, however, remained lower: 51% vs. 59% nationally. The municipalities rated as least transparent in the district were those of Opan and Galabovo (below 40%) while the most transparent municipality – and the single one in the district with a rating above average – was that of Radnevo with 65%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●●●

The ageing of the local population followed the general trend in the country. The age dependency ratio as the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 (149%) remained close to the national average (147%) in 2016. This was also the second successive year of increasing natural growth in the district – and though it remained below the national average, the gap was diminishing. The natural growth rate in the district reached –6.7‰ while the national rate was –6.0‰. At the same time, however, the number of people who moved out of the region in the last two years was greater than the people who moved in. Hence, the net migration rate dropped to –0.4‰.

The share of urban population reached 72% (vs. 73% in the country) and the population density reached 1,525 people/sq. km (vs. 1,548 people/sq. km nationally).

Education ●●●

The district's net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade stayed above the national average rate and in 2016 it rose to 81.5% while that in the country dropped to 78.2%. At the same time, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education in the district were still higher than the national average rates.

Stara Zagora was also one of the three districts (alongside Sliven and Yambol) with the most acute shortage of teachers in primary and secondary education. In 2016 there were 67 teachers per 1,000 students (vs. 75 per 1,000 students in the country) in the district.

In 2017, for the fifth year in a row, the high school students from the district got grades slightly below the national average at the matriculation exam in BLL. The district's average grade was 4.15 (vs. 4.22 nationally) while poor grades dropped to 8.29% (vs. 7.98% nationally).

Healthcare ●●●

Availability of doctors was above national average in Stara Zagora. There were 1,428 people per GP (vs. 1,611 in the country) and 491 people per specialist (vs. 530 nationally) in 2016. Following the national tendency, the number of hospital beds increased in Stara Zagora, and because the increase rate was above average, the relative number of beds overtook the national average number.

Despite the relatively high number of doctors and beds in general hospitals, hospitalizations were a relatively small number: 216 per 1,000 people (vs. 235 per 1,000 people nationally) in 2016. The probable reason was the district's closeness to Plovdiv where there were more specialists, hospitals and specialized medical services.

Security and Justice ●●●

Administration of justice in the district of Stara Zagora was characterized by relatively high judge workloads but also relatively speedy trial. In 2016 workloads rose to 12 cases a month per criminal judge at the district court (vs. 9 cases in the country). The share of cases closed within 3 months rose to 95% (vs. 89% nationally) and that of pending cases dropped to a level under 5% (vs. over 8% in the country).

Registered crimes against the person and property in the district were close to the national average rate: 12.1 per 1,000 people vs. 12.6 per 1,000 people in the country in 2016. Clearance rates, however, were above average: 56% compared to 48% nationally.

Environment ●

The main reason for the district's low rating in this category is the highly polluted air as a consequence of the emphatically industrial profile of the local economy, more specifically energy production. Carbon dioxide emissions in 2015 increased for the second year in a row by 19% to reach 4,384 t/sq. km or about 14 times higher than the national average level of 324 t/sq. km.

The local population's connectivity to public sewerage and wastewater treatment plants is also close to national average levels.

In 2015 there was a positive trend in generated waste relative to the population. The waste decreased for the second year in a row to a level considerably below the national average.

Culture ●●●

In 2016, once again, the intensity of cultural life in the district was comparable with that in the rest of the country. Visits to cinemas and libraries were below national average rates while those to theaters and museums were above them. It was the interest in local theaters and museums that registered the highest increase compared with 2015. Registered museum visits reached 947 per 1,000 people (vs. 734 per 1,000 people nationally) and theater visits reached 392 per 1,000 people (vs. 322 per 1,000 people nationally).

Key Indicators for the District of Stara Zagora

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,692	11,801	12,429	14,366	13,555	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,184	4,382	5,037	4,957	5,090	5,151
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	8,512	9,117	9,414	10,035	10,667	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	26.3	28.8	22.4	17.0	20.6	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.6	67.6	64.9	65.2	66.9	65.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	62.4	62.8	58.0	58.0	60.3	61.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	6.3	7.1	10.6	11.0	9.7	6.0
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	21.5	20.5	19.5	21.8	22.6	18.6
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	43	44	44	44	46	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,936	2,946	2,062	2,760	2,674	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,691	2,024	2,423	2,964	3,173	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	40.4	53.4	52.3	53.7	61.4	66.7
Share of roads in good condition (%)	59.3	59.0	53.4	53.7	55.7	55.7
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.7	15.7

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−5.5	−5.8	−5.8	−7.0	−6.9	−6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	−1.6	1.9	0.5	0.5	−0.2	−0.4
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.58	4.22	4.27	4.26	4.19	4.16
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	3.24	3.94	3.99	3.79	5.75	8.66
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	82.4	83.1	82.0	80.8	80.4	81.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	90.6	89.7	88.4	89.0	90.1	89.7
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	156.0	170.4	205.5	146.2	218.3	216.0
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	17.5	15.2	14.1	12.4	12.6	12.1
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	36.4	38.4	39.9	40.3	41.7	56.1
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.9	8.3	9.5	6.4	5.8	4.7
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	60.9	61.0	61.2	61.3	61.3	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	4,873.2	4,252.6	3,405.1	3,678.3	4,383.6	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	653	588	590	642	665	678
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	325	319	349	359	366	392