Haskovo District

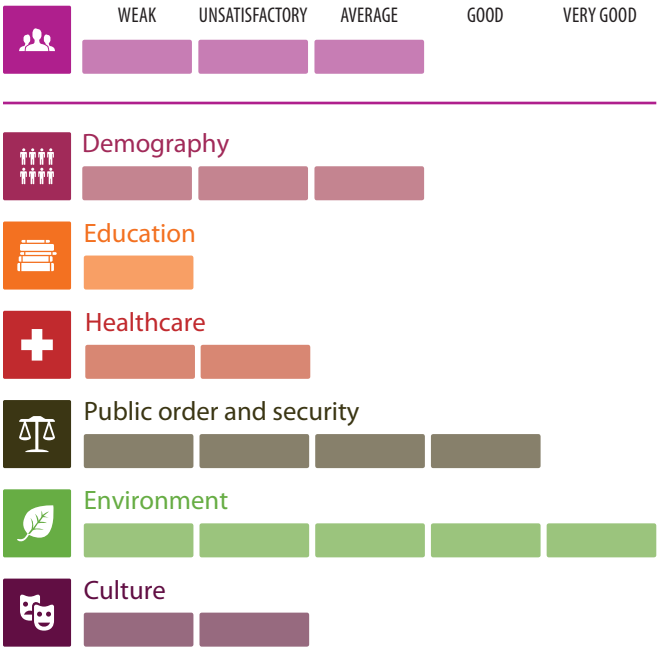
▸ Population (2018)	229,709
▸ Territory (sq. km)	5533.3
▸ Number of settlements	261
▸ Share of urban population (%)	72

Economic development in the district of Haskovo slightly accelerated according to the latest data; still, income levels were low. In 2017 GDP per capita was almost half the national figure, while incomes were increasing at a slower pace than the national average. The share of population living below the poverty line was above average, though the difference was not huge mainly due to positive developments in the labor market. Unemployment rates in the district were low, while employment rates were close to average. Investment activity in Haskovo district was considerably less intensive than elsewhere in the country. Both foreign direct investment and capital formation of local companies had levels among the lowest in Bulgaria. As a result, production volume per capita was less than half the volume produced in the country. The prospects for economic development are connected with the relatively good infrastructure and the relatively low levels of local taxes. Municipal administrations need to improve the quality of their work if they want to attract more investment.

Population ageing and depopulation have had a negative impact on the district's social development. In recent years there was also increasing emigration, which reached record peaks in 2018. One of the factors with significant negative impact was the unfavorable state of education in the district, which yielded some of the poorest results in the country. The rising rate of poor grades and the falling average grades provide no good prospects for demographic development. The healthcare system is limited by the lack of medical staff: GP availability is below average. On the other hand, the district of Haskovo has relatively low crime levels and a well-functioning judicial system. Registered crimes are on the decline, while their detection is high. Environmental conditions are also good. The intensity of cultural life is low.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

In 2017 GDP growth in Haskovo accelerated to reach 7.807 BGN/person. Still, it was rising more slowly than the average rates for Bulgaria, which has widened the gap between the district and national average rates. Salaries in the district were among the lowest in the country: in 2017 the annual average gross salary of an employed person was 8,537 BGN or 69% of the national average rate. The average income per household member was 5,119 BGN or 92% of the national average rate: the district's score was relatively good in this indicator. A partial explanation for this discrepancy could be found in the fact that pensions provide a serious share in the structure of income at the expense of salaries.

The comparatively higher household income level in Haskovo entailed a lower level of poverty in the district. The share of the population living in material deprivation (20.2%) was slightly below the national average rate of 20.9% in 2018.

Labor market

In 2018 the district of Haskovo reported a record low unemployment: 3.1%, the lowest value since 2011 when the unemployment rate was 16.1%. Improved conditions in the labor market were also visible in a rising employment rate of the working age population (66%) as well as a recovering economic activity, which reached 68.1% – indicators approaching national average rates.

In 2018 population ageing in the district was apparent in the relatively unfavorable demographic replacement ratio (61%), despite its slight improvement after 2016. That meant the future development of the labor market was faced with certain risks. Educational structure also improved in the last few years: the share of people with university education rose to 20.1% (compared to an average of 28.2% in the country), while the share of people with primary or lower education declined to 21% (compared to an average of 17.4% in the country).

Investment and economy

Poor investment activity was a strong obstacle to the district's economic development. Despite the constantly increasing number of non-financial enterprises, which were already 51 per 1,000 people in 2017, FTA expenditure remained very low: only 1,094 BGN/person (compared to an average of 1,491 BGN/person in the country). FDI was also very low in the district: it went down after slightly increasing in the previous two years to 442 EUR/person in 2017 or almost 8 times lower than the average rate for Bulgaria. As a result, production value that year was only 11,211 BGN/person or slightly less than half the country average of 23,764 BGN.

The district of Haskovo has reported a rise in sums paid for European projects, which reached 1,188 BGN/person as of mid-2019. In terms of this indicator Haskovo was also among the districts with poor results and remained far from the national average rate of 1,803 BGN.

Infrastructure

The local infrastructure is in good condition as Haskovo district is well equipped with roads and railroads. The density of the railroad network is similar to national average levels (3.7 km/100 sq. km versus 3.6 km in the country). The road network's density is higher: 20.7 km versus 17.9 km for the country with only three districts scoring higher on this indicator. The district has 93 km of highways and 155 km first class roads; their share is 21.6% versus 18.4% in the country.

Road quality has remained below the national average level: only 33.7% of surfaces were reported to have good quality, while that share for the country was 40.5% with a downward tendency in the last two years.

Local taxes

All average tax rates in Haskovo's municipalities were very close to the national average levels except the tax on taxi services, which was lower. None of the municipalities made changes in tax rates in 2019. On the whole, the municipality of Madzharovo had relatively higher rates while that in Lyubimets had relatively lower ones.

Administration

In 2019 the Active transparency rating of municipalities in the district of Haskovo dropped slightly to 63%, considerably below the national average level of 70.7%. The only districts with lower ratings were those of Kardzhali, Kyustendil, and Sofia district. The most transparent municipality in 2019 was that of Harmanli whose rating rose from 60 to 74.3%, while the least transparent one was that in Ivaylovgad whose rating dropped from 65 to 46%.

Similar to all other districts in the country, cadastral map coverage of Haskovo district increased in 2018 to reach 80.4% compared to an average of 72.4% nationwide. On the other hand, self-evaluations of municipal administrations in the district remained below average both in development of electronic government and in offered one-stop-shop services.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate in the district of Haskovo reached –8.5‰, whereas the national average rate was –6.5‰. This was attributed equally to both the lower birth rate as well as the higher death rate in the district. At the same time, there was a relatively high outmigration in the district and the net migration rate strongly deteriorated in 2018 to reach –5.2‰, its highest value for the last eight years.

The district suffers from population ageing with tendencies similar to the nation as a whole. The age dependency ratio rose to 155.5% versus 148.6% for the country. The share of population living in towns is 72.5% or almost identical to the average rate for the country, though population density in the district is below average.

Education

Educational results in the district of Haskovo were among the lowest in the country. The share of grades lower than "average" at the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature reached a district record of 16.4% in 2019. Higher shares of poor grades were only registered in Kardzhali, Silistra, and Yambol. The average grade at that exam kept falling and is now "good" 3.84 versus the average of "good" 4.06 in the country as only four districts had had lower results.

The low results have been accompanied by a lower net enrollment rate of primary school pupils – 84.7% versus 87.4% country average. Repeaters were 1.14%, whereas dropouts from primary and secondary education increased to 3.66%. The number of teachers in the district rose slightly to 77 per 1,000 pupils, versus 84 for the country. Data shows no positive effect of the higher number of teachers on educational results.

Healthcare

GP availability in the district of Haskovo was below average. There were 1,809 people per GP versus an average of 1,673 people for the country. The same refers to specialist doctors: they served 577 people versus the national average rate of 424. The 88.5% share of people with health insurance in the district was slightly higher than the national average rate. Beds in general hospitals per 1,000 people were 3.49, significantly lower than the country average of 5.34, showing no serious change in recent years. In 2018 hospitalizations dropped to 187.1 patients per 1,000 people versus a national average rate of 171.4.

Infant mortality in the district of Haskovo increased relative to the previous year from 4.9 to 6.6‰ and is now above the national average rate of 5.8‰.

Public order and security

In 2018 registered crimes against the person and property declined to 10.2 per 1,000 people with a high detection rate: 60.6% of them were detected. The work of the judicial system yielded relatively good results: criminal judges' workloads were very close to the national average rate at 9.1 cases a month per judge. Cases closed within 3 months were 93% in the district versus an average of 90.2%. The only indicator with worsening results was the share of pending criminal cases, which grew in 2018 from 5.8% to 8.2%.

Environment

Data indicates that generated household waste per person of 327 kg was considerably below the national average amount of 435 kg. Harmful carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere were 124 t/sq. km versus a national average level of 389.1 t. The population has relatively good access to sewerage: 72.6% (versus 76% nationally). The share of population with access to sewerage connected with wastewater treatment plants is relatively low, only 54.2%. It has not changed significantly in the last three years, which means investment in wastewater treatment plants has ceased for the time being.

Culture

The district's cultural life is of very low intensity. Cinema visit rates dropped to 72 visits per 1,000 people or nine times lower than the national average rate. Theaters in the district did not enjoy any significant interest, either: an average of 291 per 1,000 people visited theater performances in 2018. Museum visits were 224 per 1,000 people versus an annual average of 724 visits per 1,000 people in the country. Libraries on the other hand, enjoyed high popularity: visits in 2018 reached 1,218 per 1,000 people or the highest number after Veliko Tarnovo and Sofia (capital city).

Key indicators for the district of Haskovo

Indicators of economic development	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,412	7,001	7,276	7,807	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,157	4,321	4,861	5,119	n.a.
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	6,947	7,422	7,964	8,537	n.a.
Share of the poor relative to the country poverty line (%)	31.3	29.8	30.2	28.5	n.a.
Economic activity rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	69.2	69.0	69.2	67.5	68.1
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	61.9	63.1	64.2	64.3	66.0
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	10.4	8.6	7.1	4.7	3.1
Share of people with tertiary education aged 25–64 (%)	19.3	18.7	17.2	17.3	20.1
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	47	48	50	51	n.a.
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN per capita)	1,347	1,227	961	1,094	n.a.
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR per capita)	257	448	513	442	n.a.
Share of households with Internet access (%)	57.5	54.2	66.9	66.1	72.3
Share of roads in good condition (%)	30.0	33.1	34.2	34.8	33.7
Cadastral map coverage (%)	3.8	3.8	5.9	13.6	80.4

Indicators of social development	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Natural growth rate of the population (‰)	–8.0	–7.9	–7.7	–8.3	–8.5
Net migration rate (‰)	1.0	2.5	–4.9	–0.9	–5.2
Average grade at the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature	4.13	4.14	3.98	4.03	3.87
Percent of grades lower than 3.00 (pass level) at the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature	7.5	9.2	12.6	13.3	10.4
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	80.5	77.8	79.0	84.4	84.7
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.3	89.1	88.8	88.2	88.5
Hospitalizations per 1,000 people	188.1	198.0	202.5	201.2	187.1
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.2	12.1	11.1	11.5	10.2
Clearance rate for crimes against the person and property from those registered in the current year (%)	41.9	48.4	56.9	53.4	60.6
Share of pending criminal cases from those registered in the current year (%)	13.3	7.1	6.8	5.8	8.2
Share of the population with access to sewerage connected to wastewater treatment plants (%)	46.7	54.5	54.1	54.2	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (tons of harmful emissions/sq. km)	183.2	125.8	127.3	124.0	n.a.
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 people	46	105	145	103	72
Visits to the theater per 1,000 people	221	302	228	258	291