

Targovishte District

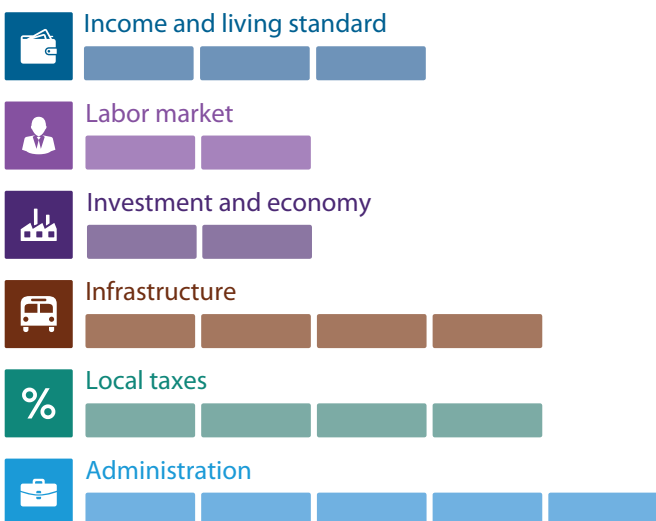
▶ Population (2019)	110,914
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,558.5
▶ Number of settlements	194
▶ Share of urban population (%)	54.1



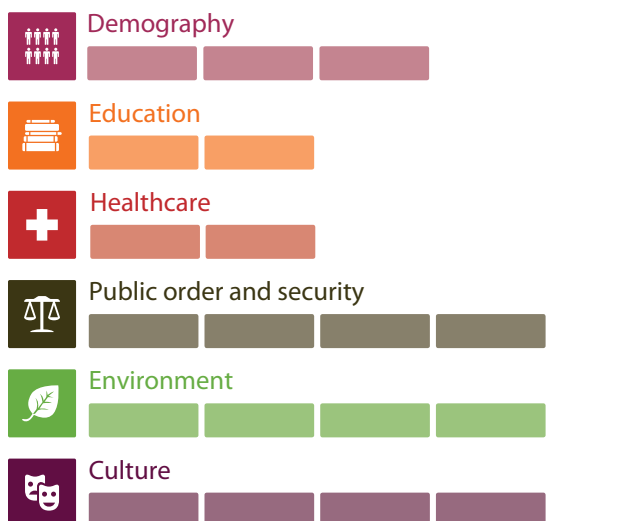
Economic growth in Targovishte district has accelerated over the last four years, but this has not led to any significant reduction of poverty levels or an increase in household incomes. This is mainly due to the negative dynamics of the labor market, characterized by rising unemployment and low employment. At the same time, the share of the workforce with primary or lower education has been growing. The district attracts foreign investment at a relatively high level, but has not made enough progress in the utilization of European funds. There is significant improvement in the quality of road surfaces and in the expansion of households' access to the internet. Despite some increases, local taxes remain low compared to most districts. The self-assessments of the municipal administrations of their capacity to pro-

vide electronic and one-stop shop services are inconsistent, but their transparency is improving. Although Targovishte is one of the few districts with positive net migration, its overall demographic indicators are gradually deteriorating, especially the natural growth rate. The district has visible problems with enrolment in secondary schools, and students' exam results have deteriorated in recent years. Targovishte district is characterized by a shortage of both GPs and specialist physicians. Despite the lowest reported workload of the courts, the speed of delivery of justice has been declining in recent years. There are visible improvements in the treatment and recycling of household waste. The theaters and libraries in the district attract great interest.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

For four consecutive years GDP in the district had been growing rapidly and in 2018 it already reached 9,981 BGN per capita. This places the district among the more developed ones in northern Bulgaria, though it is still far below the national average of 15,600 BGN per capita. A similar rapid growth is observed in the salaries of employed people in the district, with the average annual gross salary reaching 10,800 BGN in 2018 – a considerable increase compared to the 7,500 BGN it had reached in 2014.

However, due to the lower economic activity of the population, the relatively high salaries in Targovishte district have not resulted in high household incomes. The average income per household member in 2019 was 4,576 BGN, compared to the national average of 6,013 BGN. Among the more worrying trends in the district is the gradual increase in poverty levels – 30.2% of the population were living below the national poverty line in 2019.

Labor market

After a decline to 8.8% in 2015, the unemployment rate in Targovishte began to rise and in 2019 it reached 10.5% of the population aged 15+. At the same time, in 2019 the employment rate in the district remained among the lowest in the country – 60.1% of the population aged 15-64, or 10 p.p. below the national average and almost 20 p.p. behind the districts with the highest employment. As a result, the total economic activity in the district was only 71%, with lower figures registered only in Vratsa, Montana, Kardzhali and Kyustendil.

The unfavorable dynamics of the labor market can partly be attributed to the educational structure of the workforce. Only 17% of the population aged between 25 and 64 have university education, and there is evidence of a downward trend. At the same time, the share of the workforce with primary or lower education is gradually increasing – 36% in 2019, or more than double the national average, with a more unfavorable value registered only in Sliven district.

Investment and economy

Due to the markedly industrial profile of the local economy, Targovishte has a relatively small number of enterprises – 37 per 1,000 people in 2019, with an upward trend. Despite the steady growth, production value in the district remains low – in 2018 it was 15,500 BGN per capita, compared to the national average of 25,900 BGN.

Thanks to several large investments in the processing industry, the district has been attracting a relatively high amount of FDI – 2,514 EUR/person by the end of 2018. FTA expenditures in the district have varied considerably over the years, but

after 2012 they were around and over 2,000 BGN/person per year. With utilization of European funds at 1,188 BGN/person by 15 June 2020, the district occupies one of the last places in the country.

Infrastructure

The positive assessment of Targovishte in this category is mainly due to the good quality of road surfaces in it. According to RIA estimates for 2019, 61% of the roads in the district were in good condition, compared to only 26% three years earlier. There is also significant improvement in the population's access to high-speed internet, which according to the latest data is available to 77% of the households, compared to only 34% five years earlier.

However, the share of highways and first-class roads remains low – 14.7%, compared to the national average of 18.6%. The average density of the road network is generally above the country's average. The density of the railway network is low – 2.8 km/100 sq.km of the territory, and remains significantly lower than the national average.

Local taxes

Local taxes in the municipalities of Targovishte district have been gradually increasing, but they still remain at relatively low levels. In 2020, the largest increase was in the taxation on the immovable property of legal entities, where the rate rose from an average of 1.73‰ in 2019 to 1.83‰ in 2020. The tax rate for taxi transportation remained at an average of 303 BGN – the second lowest in the country after Vidin, where in all district municipalities it was at the minimum of 300 BGN. Below the average was the patent tax for retail trade – 9.07 BGN/sq.m of retail space, versus 12.93 BGN/sq.m on average for the country. The tax on non-gratuitous property acquisition increased from 2.24% in 2018 to 2.48% in 2019 and in 2020 remained almost unchanged at an average of 2.49%.

Administration

The cadastral map of the district already covers 95% of the territory. However, the assessment of the municipalities' capacity to provide e-services went down from an average of 3.23 out of 5 points in 2019 to 3.04 points in 2020. At the same time, the self-assessment of the provision of one-stop shop services rose from 2.66 to 3.33 points. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations also improved, with the average rating for the municipalities in the district going up to 78.4%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Targovishte is among the few districts in the country with a positive net migration rate, with a difference of 2.7‰ of the total population between the in-migration and out-migration numbers for 2019. At the same time, however, there was visible deterioration in the natural growth rate which fell from -7‰ in 2015 to -8.9‰ in 2019. At this stage, the population ageing indicators remain close to the national average, but have been deteriorating relatively fast.

The degree of urbanization in the district has not changed significantly in recent years and remains among the lowest in the country. Population density in the urban areas has been decreasing over the years, reaching 1,071 persons/sq.km in 2019, compared to 1,510 people for the country on average.

Education

What this ranking most visibly shows is the inability of the educational system in Targovishte district to cover school-age children. Thus, in 2019 over 23% of children who should have been enrolled in 5th to 8th grade remained out of school, against 10-12% in most districts and a little over 13% on average for the country. The share of dropouts was also high – 3%, while at 0.91%, the share of repeaters was around the national average.

The results achieved by the students in the district at the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature have been deteriorating in recent years, and in 2020 the average score dropped to 3.85, compared to 4.20 in the country. This downward turn is combined with a significant increase – up to 10.3% – in the share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades. It is noteworthy, however, that the scores in the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade have been gradually improving, reaching an average of 35.2 points in 2020, versus 36 points on average for the country. These low achievements do not seem to be affected by the high value of the teacher-student ratio, which ranks Targovishte second in the country with 104 school teachers per 1,000 students, after Smolyan district with 122 teachers per 1,000 students.

Healthcare

After Dobrich, Targovishte is the district with the most difficult access to GPs, with an average of 2,311 people per doctor in 2019. The index of access to specialist physicians also has an unfavorable value. For seven years in a row the number of beds in the district's general hospitals had been gradually increasing and in 2019 it reached 536 beds per 100,000 persons, which was close to the national average.

The health system coverage in the district is improving, reaching 88.3% of the total population, compared to the national average of 88.8%. In recent years, the district's population morbidity, measured through the number of hospitalizations, has

decreased to 187 people per 1,000 persons, but it may be assumed that seeking medical treatment in neighboring districts is becoming more common. The relatively high infant mortality of 6.7‰ for 2019 gives grounds for concern, though the rate has been extremely volatile over the last decade.

Public order and security

In 2019, the relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months decreased to 87%, and the share of pending cases rose to 13.5% – the second highest in the country after Montana. These unfavorable developments in the local judiciary, which until recently was among the most efficient in the country, are even more difficult to explain given the courts' small workloads – one criminal judge hears an average of 3.5 cases per month, compared to an average of 9.1 per judge in the country as a whole.

Targovishte also enjoys a relatively low crime rate, with the crimes against the person and property registered in 2019 amounting to 9.5 per 1,000 persons. The detection rate was 73.8%, which ranks Targovishte second in the country after Smolyan district.

Environment

Carbon emissions in Targovishte district have remained relatively low in recent years. In the period between 2014 and 2018, the amounts of carbon dioxide varied between 100 t and 130 t/100 sq.km. Households have been generating relatively small volumes of waste – 302 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling increased from 9% in 2017 to 68% in 2018, which is a significant improvement. However, the share of households connected to public sewerage networks remained unchanged in 2018 at only 56%. Only 45% of the sewerage networks are connected to a wastewater treatment plant, which is considerably below the national average of 64%

Culture

In recent years, interest in theaters in Targovishte district has been growing, and in 2019 they were visited on average 652 times per 1,000 persons from the population, compared to 434 times in 2015. On this indicator, the district ranks immediately behind the capital. Visits to libraries in the district number well above average – 1,006 per 1,000 persons, compared to 683 in Bulgaria as a whole. On the other hand, museums did not attract much interest, as visits to them were 175 per 1,000 persons – more than 5 times below the national average. Probably due to the lack of infrastructure, cinemas were not visited particularly often either.

Key indicators for the district of Targovishte

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,148	9,981	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,879	3,879	4,576	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,754	10,833	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	28.1	30.2	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	60.4	63.0	60.1	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	12.4	11.2	10.5	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	33.6	33.7	36.0	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	19.8	16.8	16.8	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	14,347	15,518	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,459	2,071	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	2,165	2,514	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	54.0	65.7	77.1	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	26.0	51.3	60.8	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	20.4	20.4	20.4	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	69.3	77.0	78.4	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-8.0	-7.8	-8.9	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-2.8	0.0	2.7	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.96	3.88	3.85	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	33.1	31.9	35.2	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	97	92	104	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	78.3	76.4	76.8	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.9	87.9	88.3	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	2,056	2,334	2,311	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.3	10.8	9.5	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	4.7	3.5	3.5	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	56.0	56.2	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	313	302	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	8.6	68.3	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	256	214	185	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	472	496	625	362

* The data for 2019 are included in the 2020 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2019-2020 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2020. The same also applies for the previous years.