

# Pleven District

|                                 |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2020)             | 234,872 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km)            | 4,653.3 |
| ▶ Number of settlements         | 123     |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 65.9    |



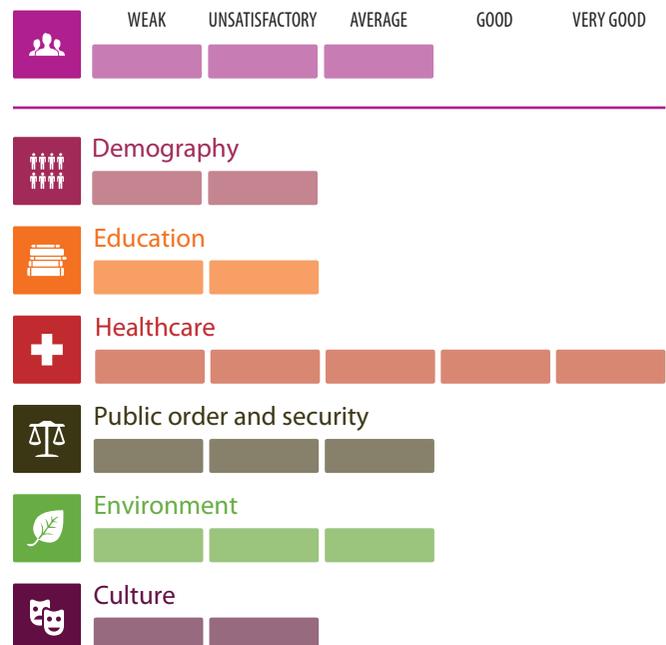
Although in 2019 GDP per capita in Pleven district again recorded considerable growth, it still remained relatively low. The rise in economic activity in the district was accompanied by a decline in employment and a rise in unemployment. Investment and business activity rallied and grew significantly in 2019, but the indicator values still lagged considerably behind the national average. The share of highways and first-class roads is low and so is road quality. Local taxes remained close to the national average in 2021. The ratings for the transparency of the local governments lag behind the national ones. The population of the district has been ageing rapidly. The performance of students remained poor in 2021. Pleven is a

district with strong traditions in the field of healthcare and in 2020 it was the country's leader in terms of the indicators in this category. The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals was high, which is probably due to the easy access to doctors and the availability of hospital beds. The workloads of the local criminal judges are relatively low, which has a positive effect on the speed of delivery of justice. The volumes of carbon dioxide emissions remain several times lower than the national average. The drop in attendance to cultural events caused by the pandemic and the restrictions imposed in 2020 have had an even greater impact on the district.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

Although in 2019 GDP per capita in Pleven district again recorded a considerable nominal growth rate – 12%, compared to the national average of 10%, it still remained relatively low – 9,800 BGN/person, against 17,200 BGN/person in the country. Salaries also rose relatively fast and their average amount reached 11,600 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN nationwide. Incomes per household member remained generally stable, with a rate of increase for 2019 of a bare 2%, compared to 8% in the country. The average annual income per household member reached 5,900 BGN and for the first time in ten years fell below the national average of 6,000 BGN.

The share of population living with material deprivation remained above the national average in 2019. At the same time, the share of those living below the poverty line shrank to a level below the national average – 20.4% in the district, versus 22.6% nationally.

### Labor market

Economic activity in Pleven district continued to intensify in 2020, but at 72.9%, it remained below the national average of 73.7%. This growth was accompanied by a parallel decline in employment and a rise in unemployment. The employment rate shrank at the same rate as the average one in the country and was down to 61.6%, against 68.5% nationwide. The unemployment rate, for its part, rose faster and was double the national one – 11.3%, versus the national average of 5.2%.

In 2020 the educational structure of the workforce in Pleven district marked an improvement. The share of the population aged 25–64 with a university degree rose to 25.4%, against 29.2% in the country, while the share of those with primary or lower education decreased to 19.1%, compared to 16.9% nationally.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 has been rising but it still remains relatively low – 63.2% in Pleven district, against 67.1% countrywide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 63 young people joining the workforce.

### Investment and economy

Investment and business activity in Pleven district rallied and grew significantly in 2019, but the indicator values still lagged considerably behind the national average. The relative number of non-financial enterprises reached 42 per 1,000 persons, versus 61 per 1,000 persons nationally. FTA acquisition expenditures grew by 19%, compared to 15% in the country, and for the first time exceeded 2,000 BGN/person. After the outflow of FDI the previous year, in 2019 its amounts grew considerably – by 123%, compared to the average national rate of 3%, reaching 1,171 EUR/person, versus the national average of

3,655 EUR/person. Production value in the district rose by 11%, against 8% in the country, and in 2019 it reached 14,500 BGN/person, compared to 28,000 BGN/person nationwide.

Utilization of European funds in Pleven district remains close to the national average. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,120 BGN/person, compared to 2,217 BGN/person on a national level. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded by Belene municipality.

### Infrastructure

Pleven district is characterized by a higher than average density of its railroad network. The density of its road network is close to, though slightly below the national average. In 2019, the share of highways and first-class roads was low – 12.2%, versus 18.5 in the country, and the share of road surfaces in good condition remained small – 36.5%, compared to the national average of 41.4%.

The share of households with internet access remains low – 68.9%, against the average of 78.9% nationally.

The share of households connected to a gas supply in 2020 was 2.3%, against 3.1% in the country. The installed RES capacity is 0.3 kW/person, compared to the national average of 0.6 kW/person.

### Local taxes

Against the background of its relatively weak economic development, in 2021 Pleven district again kept local taxes at levels comparable to the national average rates, though the local rates were significantly higher than the average ones in North-western Bulgaria.

Two of the monitored rates in the district were considerably higher than the respective national averages – the tax on non-residential real estate for legal entities and the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property.

### Administration

Cadastral map coverage in Pleven district has registered a considerable increase and in 2019 it exceeded the national average. The local administrations' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services also rose and in 2021 they were above those in the country on average.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration have been lagging behind and in 2021 for the first time they fell below the national average – 71.1% in Pleven district, versus 73.2% nationally. Within the district, the highest ratings of over 82% were achieved by the municipalities of Dolna Mitropoliya, Knezha and Cherven bryag.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

While in the previous ten years the natural population growth rate had fluctuated between  $-9.0\%$  and  $-11.0\%$ , in 2020 it fell sharply to  $-13.5\%$ , against the national average of  $-9.5\%$ . As in most other districts, the net migration rate reached a positive value, but at  $1.3\%$ , it remained relatively low.

These processes are the main prerequisite for the high degree of population ageing in the district. In 2020, the age dependency rate as a ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 years reached  $187.7\%$ , compared to  $150.6\%$  in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 years –  $44.2\%$ , versus  $34.1\%$  nationwide.

The share of urban population remains relatively small –  $65.9\%$ , compared to  $72.9\%$  in the country, and population density in the urban settlements is relatively low –  $1,070$  persons/sq. km, while nationally it is  $1,506$  persons/sq. km.

### Education

The district does not perform well in terms of the indicators assessing education. The enrolment ratio in 5th–8th grades rose in 2020 to  $87.3\%$  and remained slightly above the national average of  $86.5\%$ . The percentage of repeaters continued to shrink and came close to the average for the country. At the same time, for the third consecutive year the share of dropouts from primary and secondary school remained high, reaching a figure well above average –  $3.5\%$  in the district, against  $2.5\%$  in the country. The relative number of teachers in primary and secondary schools dropped sharply in 2020 but retained a level above the national average –  $90$  teachers per  $1,000$  students, against  $87$  teachers per  $1,000$  students nationally.

Students' results again remained low in 2021. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was  $31.8$  p., compared to  $37.9$  p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was among the lowest in the country –  $3.97$ , versus  $4.21$  in the country, and "fail" grades (below  $3.00$ ) made up  $12\%$ , against the national average of  $7\%$ .

Pleven is one of the few districts in Bulgaria registering a steady increase in the number of university students over the past few years. In 2020 it reached  $16/1,000$  persons, yet it still remained half the national average.

### Healthcare

Pleven district has strong traditions in the sphere of healthcare and in 2020 it held the top place in the country in this category. The share of people with health insurance in the region remained at levels above the national average –  $91.0\%$  in the district, compared to  $88.7\%$  in the country. Pleven is also the district with the highest proportion both of GPs and specialist physicians. One local GP cares for  $1,243$  persons on average, compared to  $1,727$  persons per doctor in the country.

Pleven is also the district best provided with hospital beds. In 2020 their number even went up to reach  $9.94$  beds per  $1,000$  persons, compared to  $5.52$  beds per  $1,000$  persons in the country.

The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals remained high in 2020 –  $206$  per  $1,000$  persons, compared to  $138$  per  $1,000$  persons nationwide, which is probably related to the easy access to doctors and the availability of hospital beds in the district. It can also be assumed that residents of other districts come to Pleven to seek medical care.

### Public order and security

The workloads of the criminal judges in Pleven district are relatively small, which has a favorable impact on the speed of delivery of justice. In 2020, one local judge heard an average of  $6.4$  cases a month, compared to  $8.6$  cases nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was  $92\%$ , compared to the average of  $90\%$  nationwide, while pending cases made up  $10\%$ , versus  $11\%$  in the country.

The total number of crimes registered in Pleven district in the past ten years is on the whole higher than the national average but within the past three years it has followed a steady downward curve. In 2020, registered crimes against the person and property in the district constituted  $10.9$  per  $1,000$  persons, versus the average of  $9.9$  per  $1,000$  persons nationwide. The detection rate was  $53.4\%$ , against  $52.1\%$  for the country on average.

### Environment

In 2019, the relative volumes of carbon dioxide emissions in Pleven district again remained many times smaller than the country's average. The share of population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage network amounted to  $57.0\%$ , compared to  $76.4\%$  countrywide.  $53.3\%$  of the population were connected to a wastewater treatment plant, against  $64.6\%$  in the country. Both indicators place Pleven district considerably behind the respective national averages, which is also a consequence of the relatively low share of urban population.

In 2018, the amounts of household waste generated in the district increased for the third year in a row, but they remained below the national average. At the same time, the amounts of waste handed over for treatment and recycling also went up and reached  $90\%$ , compared to the national average of  $71\%$ .

### Culture

In 2020, Pleven district's cultural life again remained characterized by relatively low intensity. The drop in attendance to cultural events caused by the pandemic and the restrictions imposed in 2020 had an even greater impact on the district. Only the number of museum visits reached a level above the national average –  $345$  visits per  $1,000$  persons, against  $332$  per  $1,000$  persons nationally.

## Key indicators for the district of Pleven

| Indicators of economic development   | 2018   | 2019   | 2020 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)   | 8,795  | 9,813  | n.a. | <b>17,170</b>    |
| Average annual income per household member (BGN)                               | 5,774  | 5,893  | n.a. | <b>6,013</b>     |
| Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)                          | 10,461 | 11,567 | n.a. | <b>15,209</b>    |
| Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)             | 30.3   | 20.4   | n.a. | <b>22.6</b>      |
| Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)                               | 64.4   | 63.2   | 61.6 | <b>68.5</b>      |
| Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)                   | 8.2    | 7.9    | 11.3 | <b>5.2</b>       |
| Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)         | 18.8   | 20.8   | 19.1 | <b>16.9</b>      |
| Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)                   | 24.1   | 23.1   | 25.4 | <b>29.2</b>      |
| Production value (BGN/person)  | 13,009 | 14,472 | n.a. | <b>28,027</b>    |
| Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)           | 1,722  | 2,049  | n.a. | <b>3,155</b>     |
| Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person) | 524    | 1,171  | n.a. | <b>3,655</b>     |
| Share of households with Internet (%)  | 63.6   | 71.7   | 68.9 | <b>78.9</b>      |
| Share of roads in good condition (%)   | 33.6   | 36.5   | n.a. | <b>41.4</b>      |
| Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)                                 | 17.1   | 17.1   | 17.1 | <b>17.9</b>      |
| AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*                 | 75.0   | 71.8   | 71.7 | <b>73.2</b>      |

| Indicators of social development  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Rate of natural increase (‰)  | –10.8 | –11.0 | –13.5 | <b>–9.5</b>      |
| Net migration rate (‰)  | –5.0  | –6.1  | 1.3   | <b>4.4</b>       |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**  | 3.94  | 4.00  | 3.97  | <b>4.21</b>      |
| Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 26.8  | 28.8  | 31.8  | <b>37.9</b>      |
| Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)                                  | 88.6  | 87.0  | 87.3  | <b>86.5</b>      |
| Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students                | 93    | 97    | 90    | <b>87</b>        |
| Share of population with health insurance (%)   | 90.3  | 91.9  | 91.0  | <b>88.7</b>      |
| Population per one GP (number of people)  | 1,205 | 1,212 | 1,243 | <b>1,727</b>     |
| Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people                    | 13.0  | 11.7  | 10.9  | <b>9.9</b>       |
| Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)                                  | 9.4   | 7.7   | 6.4   | <b>8.6</b>       |
| Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)           | 56.8  | 57.0  | n.a.  | <b>76.4</b>      |
| Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)                                 | 391   | n.a.  | n.a.  | <b>409</b>       |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)                  | 89.7  | n.a.  | n.a.  | <b>70.9</b>      |
| Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons   | 434   | 452   | 93    | <b>190</b>       |
| Visits to museums per 1,000 persons   | 796   | 854   | 345   | <b>322</b>       |

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.