Pernik district

▶ Population (2021) 114,162
▶ Territory (sq. km) 2,394
▶ Number of settlements 171
▶ Share of urban population (%) 78.4

S alaries and pensions in Pernik district continue to rise and the poverty level remains low. The workforce is characterized by a relatively high share of people with secondary education. Investment activity in the district is relatively slack. Pernik is among the districts with the highest density of road networks, although the share of highways and first-class roads remains low. The average rate of the taxes levied by the local municipalities is relatively low. The AIP active transparency rating of the district's municipalities is among the lowest in the country. Age dependency continues to deteriorate. Stu-

dents' results in the district are traditionally lower than the national average. Pernik has the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals. The relative number of registered crimes in Pernik district is close to the national average, while the detection rate is slightly higher. The amount of generated household waste is the highest in the country, though practically all of this waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life and tourism in the district are characterized by their low intensity, which is probably related to Pernik's proximity to the capital.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

| | WEAK | UNSATISFACTORY | AVERAGE | GOOD | VERY GOOD |

Income and living conditions

Labor market

Investment and business

Infrastructure

Local taxes

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

| | WEAK | UNSATISFACTORY | AVERAGE | GOOD | VERY GOOD |

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and justice

Environment

Culture and tourism

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2021, GDP per capita in Pernik district registered an increase, but although it was higher than the national average, it remained relatively low. Salaries and pensions have also continued to rise. The average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract has reached 14,100 BGN and is relatively low, compared to 18,700 BGN on average nationwide. At the same time, the average pension is among the highest in the country – 591 BGN, against 537 BGN countrywide. The explanation for this is that a number of the district's residents have had jobs in the capital and were paid higher salaries, with the result that their pensions are now relatively higher.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality in the district is relatively low. The poverty rate remains relatively limited.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Pernik district continues to decline and is lower than the national average – 57.1% in the district, compared to 58.5% in the country in 2022. Economic activity is increasing and its rate is among the highest in the country (only below that in the capital) – 78.1%, versus 73.6% in the country. This increase is accompanied by a simultaneous decrease in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate has reached 69.2%, against 70.4% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 4.3%, compared to 5.2% in the country.

A characteristic of the workforce in Pernik district is the relatively large share of people with secondary education. While on a national scale 54% of the population have secondary education, in Pernik district they constitute 70%, with lower shares of both university graduates and people with primary or lower education. A major challenge facing the local labor market continues to be population aging.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Pernik district again remained relatively slack in 2021. Its proximity to the capital affects both the number of enterprises and the investment flows attracted into the district. There are 46 enterprises per 1,000 people, compared to 60 per 1,000 people in the country. Both foreign and domestic investment flows have been rising but remain relatively low. FTA acquisition expenditures have reached 1,600 BGN/person, against 3,100 BGN/person countrywide, while FDI amounts to 1,900 EUR/person, compared to 4,100 EUR/person nationally. Production value in Pernik district has also gone up to 19,5200 BGN/person, compared to an average of 31,200 BGN/person nationwide.

Utilization of European funds has been on the increase but its figures still rank Pernik among the worst performing districts in the country. By 30 June 2023, payments made to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,721 BGN/person, compared to 2,836 BGN on average nationally.

Infrastructure

In 2022, the density of the road and railroad networks in Pernik district again remained considerably higher than the national average: the density of the road network is 24 km/100 sq. km (versus 18 km/100 sq. km in the country) and is the second highest in the country (after Gabrovo district), and that of the railway network is 4.8 km/100 sq. km (versus 3.6 km/100 sq. km in the country). The share of highways and first-class roads remains lower – 15.9%, against 18.5% in the country; however, the quality of the roads is close to the national average, with a share of road surfaces in good condition of 40.7%, against 41.1% countrywide.

Households' access to internet access has registered a considerable increase over the past few years, though in 2022 it again remained below the national average – 84.9% in Pernik district, versus 87.3% nationally.

Local taxes

The average level of the local taxes in Pernik district's municipalities again remained relatively low in 2023. The one exception is the average rate of the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, which is higher than the national average. The reason for this is that half of the municipalities in the district have increased the rate of this tax for 2023. Considerably lower are the average rates of the taxes on motor vehicles, taxi transportation and those on immovable non-residential property for legal entities.

Within the district, the lowest taxes are levied by the municipalities of Breznik and Zemen, and the highest ones – by the municipality of Kovachevtsi.

Administration

The local authorities' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services rose slightly in 2023, though they again remained below the country's average.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration in Pernik's municipalities retained its level and in 2023 it was the second lowest in the country, followed only by the municipalities in Kyustendil district – 52.4% in Pernik, compared to the national average of 70.3%.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of municipalities in the district was 25.4% in 2022, compared to 29.0% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues reached 69.0%, against 84.2% nationally.

🏛 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▬▬▬

🏫 Demography ▬▬▬

The natural population growth rate in Pernik district again remained considerably below the national average, reaching –22.1‰ in the district, versus –9.7‰ countrywide in 2022. The net migration rate is positive (3.1‰), though it cannot compensate for the considerable population decrease.

The rapid rate of population aging in the district is also evident in the age dependency ratios. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 is 196.0%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to that aged 15–64, it is 42.1%, against 37.7% nationally.

The share of urban population is relatively high – 78.4%, versus 73.6% countrywide, but its density is low – 856 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 persons/sq. km in the country.

📚 Education ▬▬▬

The share of children attending kindergarten is above average – 88.6% in the district, compared to 87.3% in the country. The rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade in 2022 was comparable to the national average, while the share of school year repeaters remained relatively low. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is close to the national average. Pernik is the district with the highest share of trainees in the ICT sector and in transport, storage and postal services, although neither sector provides enough opportunities for regional employment.

The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade is relatively low – 29.2 p., compared to 35.3 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature is traditionally below the national average – "Good" 3.64, versus 3.93 respectively. However, the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) in the district has risen considerably to 28.0%, against 17.9 in the country, and is the second highest nationwide, only after that in Shumen district.

The small number of university students in the district can be explained with the presence of one single small university on Pernik district's territory – the European Polytechnical University.

➕ Healthcare ▬▬▬▬

The share of people with health insurance in Pernik district has increased but is lagging behind the national average. The district is relatively well provided with GPs, but in 2022 there were again relatively few specialist physicians.

Pernik continues to be the district with the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 2.6 beds per 1,000 people, which is half the average number in the country (5.9 beds per 1,000 people). The relative number of hospitalizations is also among the lowest compared to the other districts – 61 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people nationwide. These figures suggest that Pernik's population seeks medical care outside the district, most probably in hospitals in the capital.

Life expectancy in the district is close to but below the national average. The infant mortality rate in the district has fallen considerably and is among the lowest in the country.

⚖ Security and justice ▬▬▬

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Pernik district are comparable to the national average – one local criminal judge hears an average of 9.6 cases per month, compared to 10.1 cases per month per judge in the country. The speed of delivery of justice is also comparable to the national average, with 89% of cases completed within 3 months.

The crime rate in Pernik district is close to the national average, while the detection rate is slightly higher. Registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 11.4 per 1,000 people in 2022, versus an average of 11.6 crimes per 1,000 people nationwide. The detection rate was 51%, against 49% for the country on average.

🌿 Environment ▬▬▬▬

The relatively high share of urban population accounts for the large share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 79.4%, compared to 74.8% in the country in 2021. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants is also high – 74.3%, against 66.8% countrywide. In 2021, Pernik was once again the district with the highest volume of generated household waste – 531 kg/person per annum, compared to 445 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, practically all waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, against 74% nationally.

The share of forest areas in Pernik district is relatively high – 41% in the district, versus 33% countrywide. However, the share of degraded land is twice the national average – 0.96%, compared to 0.42% in the country in 2022. The installed RES capacities relative to the population remain relatively small.

🎭 Culture and tourism ▬

Pernik is among the districts with a relatively stagnant cultural life, which is probably due to its proximity to the capital. In 2022, cinema visits rose fast and amounted to 625 per 1,000 people, exceeding the national average of 590 per 1,000 people. Visits to the local museums and libraries, however, are lagging very much behind.

Tourism activity is also of low intensity. The number of beds in accommodation facilities is 5 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people in the country. The number of overnight stays is 329 per 1,000 people, compared to 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country. The share of employees in the sector is also relatively low.

Key indicators for the district of Pernik

Economic Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,352	11,084	n.a.	20,212
Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN)	12,359	14,074	n.a.	18,733
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	16.8	19.1	19.0	22.9
Share of the working-age population (%)	57.9	58.2	57.1	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	69.8	71.2	69.2	70.4
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	5.8	4.6	4.3	5.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	11.3	11.3	14.7	16.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	25.1	18.0	15.5	29.8
Production value per capita (BGN)	15,202	19,468	n.a.	31,242
Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,432	1,641	n.a.	3,097
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR)	1,872	1,876	n.a.	4,098
Share of households with broadband internet access (%)	83.4	82.8	84.9	87.3
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	49.7	41.3	40.7	41.1
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	53.8	63.7	69.0	84.2
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	59.6	52.4	52.4	70.3

Social Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	−16.9	−9.7
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	3.1	4.2
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.06	3.79	3.64	3.93
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	32.0	28.4	29.2	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	89.6	91.0	90.4	90.7
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.9	71.4	71.3	71.9
Share of people with health insurance (%)	89.6	89.3	92.9	93.5
Population per one GP (persons)	1,536	1,595	1,563	1,678
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	11.0	9.5	11.4	11.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	13.3	8.8	11.0	11.6
Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%)	78.9	79.4	n.a.	74.8
Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	455	531	n.a.	445
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	82.1	99.9	n.a.	74.0
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	19	99	625	590
Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population)	166	143	329	3,739

* The 2022 data are included in the 2023 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2022-23 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2023. The same is valid for the previous years.

*** Data are for three-year periods and are updated annually.