REGIONAL PROFILES
INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT
2015

IME
Institute for Market Economics

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Acronyms Used

AIP Foundation	Access to Information Programme Foundation
APIA	Access to Public Information Act
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTA	Fixed Tangible Assets
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Science
MI	Ministry of the Interior
MpHAT	Multi-profile Hospital for Active Treatment
NCPHA	National Centre of Public Health and Analyses
NHIF	National Health Insurance Fund
NRA	National Revenue Agency
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NSSI	National Social Security Institute
OP	Operational Programme
pp	percentage point/percentage points

Preface

This year, the Institute for Market Economics (IME) once again presents its study, unique in scale and profundity, of the current socioeconomic state and development of Bulgaria's districts. By now a tradition, the *Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development* study contains current socioeconomic profiles of the 28 districts in Bulgaria, as well as a cluster analysis that groups them in clusters according to their similarities and differences.

The IME team has constantly endeavoured to expand and deepen its study and also to explore new aspects of regional development. Driven by this ambition, this year the districts' profiles are based on a larger number of indicators: 63, grouped in 12 categories. The categories, on their part, fall into two big sections: *Economic Development* and *Social Development*. This has been done for the first time and we believe it has helped improve the structure and organisation of the districts' profiles.

One of the novelties in the current publication is the replacement of the Economy category from the previous publications of *Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development* with three new categories: *Income and Living Conditions*; *Labour Market*; *Investment*. We believe the analysis of the districts' economies has thus become more focused, which allows the main challenges before the development of any district to be clearly demarcated.

The social environment analysis on its part was expanded in two areas unexplored so far: *Culture* and *Security and Justice*. The *Culture* category considers the intensity of cultural activities by studying the number of visits to cultural institutions and events in the districts. The *Security and Justice* category, on the other hand, adds to the social background issues of security and access to the judicial system in the districts. Another category from last year's study – *Taxes and Administration* – has been divided into two categories: *Taxes and Fees* and *Administration* in order to enrich the analysis by means of new indicators that pertain to local administrative services – e-services, one-stop shop services and cadastral map coverage.

We do hope that this year's publication, too, will find its readers and provoke great interest in anyone interested in regional development in Bulgaria – politicians, entrepreneurs, researchers, lecturers, journalists and so on. For several years now the *Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development* study has become a "one-stop" source of information and analysis on region development in Bulgaria. It has been used in drafting district development strategies and municipal plans, business strategies and analyses, in research by experts and students, in media publications. The popularity and the variety of uses of this publication continue to encourage us to improve it with every new edition.

The IME team hereby wishes to express its most sincere gratitude to the *America for Bulgaria Foundation* for its consistent support for IME research in the field of regional development.

Enjoy reading our study!

The team of the Institute for Market Economics

The Current State and Trends in Regional Development: a General Review

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and Living Conditions

The recovery of Bulgarian districts from the 2009 economic crisis has gradually accelerated. The Bulgarian gross domestic product equalled its pre-crisis level in 2014.

The recovery process has been differently paced in each district. Most of the country was affected by the crisis, and it was only the districts of Sofia, Plovdiv and Stara Zagora that did not report shrinkage of their gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009. A total of nine districts had reached their pre-crisis GDP level by 2012. The City of Sofia, Dobrich, Pazardzhik, Razgrad, Veliko Tarnovo and Yambol are also listed in this category.

Household incomes were also badly affected by the crisis, and the consequences were most noticeable in 2010. Unlike aggregate production, household income recovery to pre-crisis levels was a fact in most districts by 2012. Nonetheless, incomes continued to be affected by slow economic growth, though the average annual household income per capita remained unchanged in 2014 – it even dropped in 10 districts. The difference between the district with the highest incomes and the one with the lowest incomes per household member still exceeds 200% – 6,890 BGN per capita in Sofia (Capital City) compared to 3,289 BGN per capita in Silistra.

The indicators regarding poverty and living conditions in Bulgaria remained steady in 2012 – the last year with relevant data available. The share of households with low intensity of economic activity, i.e. low employment, was the highest in districts with depressed labour markets (as of 2012). Montana, Pazardzhik, Smolyan and Vidin constitute examples of this relation. Pazardzhik is generally characterized by some of the most unfavourable indicators concerning poverty and living conditions, but the quick recovery of the local labour market in 2013 and 2014 will probably improve these indicators in the years to come. In addition to Pazardzhik, the districts of Sliven and Vidin also had 1/3 of their population below the respective region's poverty line.

Labour Market

It was only in 2014 that the recovery of the labour markets gathered momentum. Following the general slump in the employment rate in 2009 and 2010, about half the districts have started to report some growth in their employment rates since 2011. However, this increase has been due to the faster drop in the workforce compared to the rate of decrease in the number of employed people. The unemployment rate continued to grow in most districts till 2013 thus causing steady growth of the population's economic activity coefficient.

The long-expected positive reversal on the labour market, both nationally and regionally, occurred in most districts in 2014. In 2014 the growth of the employment rate was mainly due to the considerable number of new jobs, and not due to negative demographic trends and a drop in the workforce in Bulgaria. The employment rate increased in 19 out of the 28 districts, but the employment was far below its pre-crisis levels in most of them. The districts of Kardzhali, Razgrad, Shumen and Veliko Tarnovo represent the only exceptions.

There is a different picture in several districts where the employment rate suffered most from the crisis. Lovech District, where the employment rate in 2014 was still lower by 11.2 percentage points than that in 2008, is the 'cham-

Figure 1: Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in 2012 (in BGN)
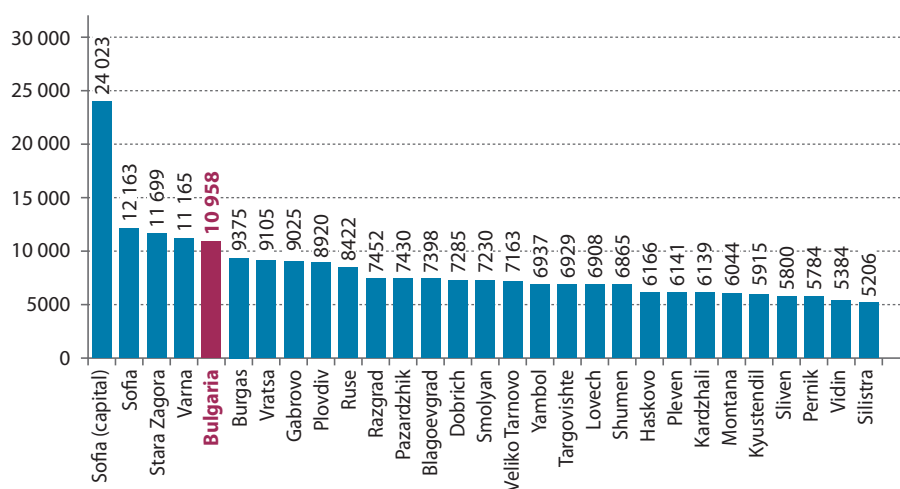
Source: NSI

Figure 2: Employment rate of the population 15+ (annual average) for the year 2014 (%)

Source: NSI

| above 50% | 45–50% | 40–45% | below 40% |
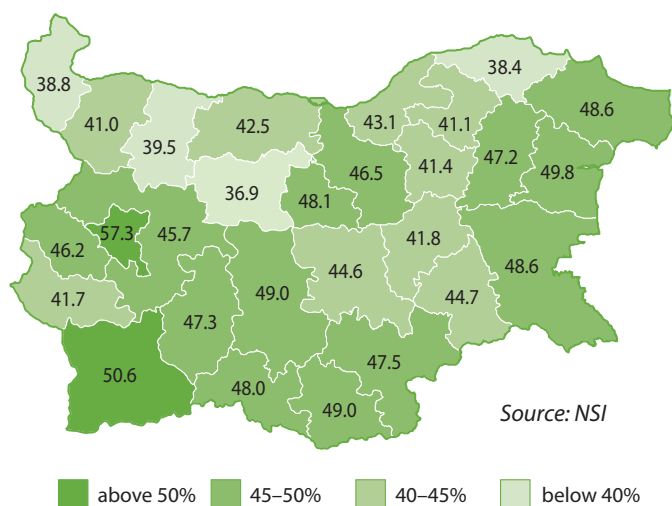
pion' among them. Other districts with a sharp drop in employment during the crisis were Kyustendil (–7.8 pp), Blagoevgrad (–6.6 pp), Smolyan (–6.2 pp), Sliven (–6.1 pp), Silistra (–5.9 pp) and Varna (–5 pp). The crisis aggravated the structural weaknesses of the local economies in some of them. Kyustendil, Silistra and Sliven represent such typical examples. The economic hardships in these districts have caused the emigration of people in fertile age, potential members of the workforce, which has intensified the negative demographic processes.

Despite the obvious recovery of employment in the country as a whole in 2014, some districts have not taken part in this process and retain critically low employment rates – below 40%. All of them are located in the northern part of Bulgaria – Lovech, Silistra, Vidin and Vratsa. These districts, excluding Lovech, also feature very high unemployment rates: 18.1% for Vratsa, and more than 22% in Vidin and Silistra for 2014, twice the average for the country (11.4%). Lovech ranks last among all districts in its rate of economic activity. Barely 36.9% of the population 15+ is employed or jobless, and the rest neither works nor actively looks for a job.

Investment

The local labour market problems are usually related to traditionally low investment. Some of the most poorly developed districts also feature a comparatively small number of operating non-financial companies relative to the population. In 2013 Kardzhali, Montana, Silistra, Targovishte, Vidin and Vratsa reported between 29 and 33 enterprises per 1,000 people relative to 52 for Bulgaria. Some of these districts rank among the least favourable destinations for foreign direct investment (FDI). The districts of Haskovo, Kardzhali, Kyustendil, Montana, Silistra, Sliven, Smolyan, Shumen and Yambol attracted less than EUR 1,000 per capita in 2013 (in cumulative terms), or three times less than the country average.

With the onset of the crisis at the end of 2008, foreign investment was badly affected, and some districts even reported a net outflow. Among those, Pernik, Sofia (Capital City) and Varna experienced the greatest boom in construction till 2008. Simultaneously, some districts like Burgas, Pazardzhik, Plovdiv, Sofia and Stara Zagora managed to attract considerable foreign investment after the crisis. Compared to 2008, it almost quadrupled in Burgas at the end of 2013.

Direct foreign investment is often interrelated with high expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (FTA)[1]. In 2013 investments in FTA ranked second in Burgas to those in the capital Sofia related to the local population. The drop in investment was the biggest in some of the leading economic centres – for instance, investment halved in 2013 relative to 2008 in Sofia (Capital City), Ruse, Smolyan and Varna, and was three times lower in Pernik and Stara Zagora.

Some districts have managed to compensate the low private investment since 2009 with European funds. An example of such a successful anti-crisis policy were the municipalities of the Lovech District that ranked it third in terms of utilisation of EU funds as of 31 January 2015 – almost 1,000 BGN per capita. The districts of Kardzhali, Razgrad, Vidin, Vratsa and Yambol provide more good examples. While Gabrovo and Burgas have remained leaders in attracting EU funds, leaders in economic terms, such as Sofia (Capital City), Plovdiv, Stara Zagora and Varna, have performed relatively poorly.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure constitutes an important factor in the districts' economic development and is probably one of the reasons why those in North Bulgaria are lagging behind. Infrastructure development, however, has made slow progress throughout Bulgaria. The share of roads in good condition increased from 39.6% in 2013 to 40.5% in 2014. Sliven is the leader featuring an almost double relative share of roads in good condition compared with that in the country as a whole. Almost half the roads in the districts of Blagoevgrad, Pazardzhik, Pernik, Stara Zagora and Smolyan are also in good condition. Less than a third of the roads in Haskovo, Kardzhali, Montana, Ruse, Sofia and Vratsa are in good condition.

Owing to public investment in building road infrastructure, the density of the road network has gradually increased in the districts where the new roads pass. The road network density increased in 2013 in Burgas, Kyustendil, Pernik, Shumen and Yambol, but in the country as a whole, the average density of roads per square km remained the same compared to 2012 – 17.7 km/sq. km.

[1] The expenditure on the acquisition of FTAs depends on both private investment (domestic and foreign) and investment in FTAs of national and local public authorities, including that financed from European funds.

Figure 3: Share of roads in good condition per district (%)

Source: RIA

■ above 50%　■ 40–50%　■ 30–40%　□ below 30%
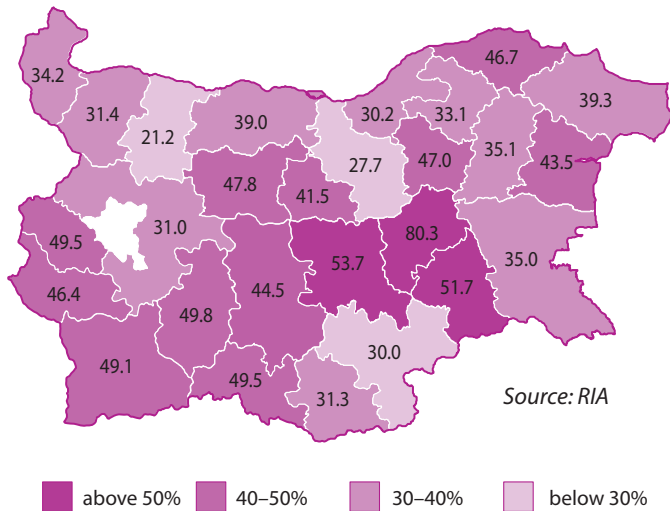
Simultaneously, the railway network density gradually decreased following the discontinuation of low-effective lines. In 2013 the railway network density decreased most in the district of Yambol.

The number of households with Internet access has grown considerably for the past several years – 56.7% of households had access to the Internet in 2014, or twice as many compared to five years earlier. Some of the most underdeveloped districts also have the lowest rate of access to the Internet – less than 40% of the households in Kyustendil and Vratsa have such access.

Taxes and Fees

Regarding the local tax environment, it is notable that the local authorities' approach mostly depends on the availability or lack of investment and operating businesses. The levels of local taxes and fees remain relatively high in the biggest economic centres, and relatively low in the less developed districts. Nevertheless, neither do high taxes and fees discourage investors from starting businesses, or the population from emigrating to districts with relatively high tax burdens, nor do low taxes and fees manage to attract entrepreneurs and migrants to the less developed districts. Therefore, other factors, such as the size of the local market, the infrastructure quality, the availability of a suitable workforce, job opportunities, the social environment, etc., weigh much more heavily on investors' decisions to start a business or to move to a particular municipality or district.

No significant changes in local taxes and fees have been noted in recent years. Changes regarding the annual license tax for retailers have been the most uncommon, and the most common changes have been those regarding the annual waste collection charge for real estate owned by legal entities. The waste collection charge was the only one decreased more times (57) than it was increased (54) from 2013 to 2015.

Administration

Local administrative bodies have varying success in terms of the administrative services they offer. Generally, Bulgaria has made more progress with regard to one-stop shop services compared to the development of e-services. Regarding the integrated one-stop shop services, municipalities have generally completed stage 4 or 5 – 'Working' and 'Developing'. It is only in the district of Varna that most municipalities have reported the completion of the final sixth stage, 'Excellent', in 2015. Progress has been slower concerning e-services. About 2/3 of municipalities have reported that they do not offer such services. For 2015, such municipalities predominate in the districts of Blagoevgrad, Kardzhali, Ruse, Shumen, Silistra, Sofia and Vidin. Varna is once more distinguished as a good example, since Varna Municipality has offered the highest degree of electronic services in 2015 – at the so-called 'transaction level'– that allows deals to be completed, including payment and delivery.

The progress of the share of territory included in the cadastral map has lagged behind in most districts of Bulgaria, which is an obstacle before investment, especially when new construction is planned. In 2014 less than one fifth of the entire territory of the country was included in the cadastral map (18.1%). Only Sofia (Capital City) and Lovech stand out with their high coverage – 95.8%, and 74% respectively, in 2014. In the districts of Haskovo, Kardzhali, Pernik, Veliko Tarnovo, Vidin and Vratsa the picture is radically different where the share of territory included in cadastral maps was less than 10%.

In addition to the slow progress of developing cadastral maps and e-services, the transparency of local administrations also poses a challenge. According to the 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the "Access to Information Program" Foundation (AIP), the districts of Dobrich, Gabrovo, Sliven and Sofia (Capital City) occupy the top of the ranking, while the districts of Kardzhali, Kyustendil and Sofia rank at the bottom.

Figure 4: 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the 'Access to Information Program' Foundation (maximum = 88.4)

Source: AIP

■ above 60%　■ 50–60%　■ 40–50%　□ below 40%
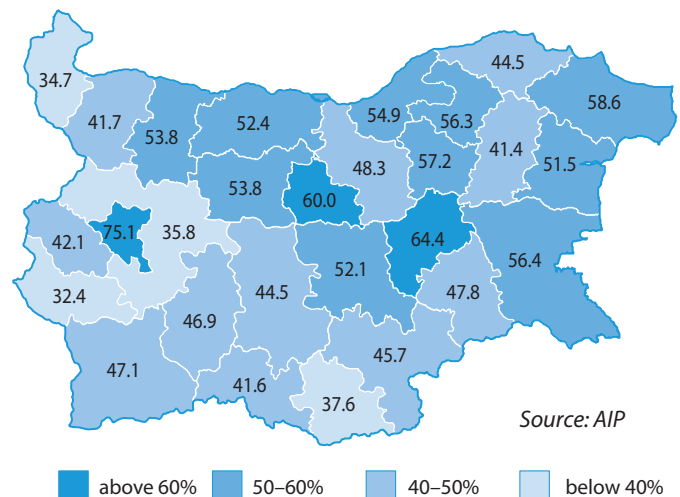
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The demographic background, though unfavourable throughout Bulgaria, is relatively better in districts that are more active in investment and business, offer more job opportunities and higher incomes. The districts of Kardzhali and Sliven, the economies of which are rated 'average' and 'unsatisfactory', respectively, but which have a good demographic rating, are the only exception. The 'good' demographic rating of the district of Sliven is mainly due to the traditionally high birthrate. Sliven reported the highest birthrate in the country once again in 2014, 12.4‰. This leads to relatively favourable age dependency ratios in the district of Sliven, too. Kardzhali, on its part, reported an unusually high net migration rate (12‰) in 2014 because of the high number of immigrants, one third of which came from other districts in Bulgaria, and over two thirds – from abroad. The rate of natural increase in the district of Kardzhali has also been traditionally more favourable compared to the country's average, which slows down the population ageing process.

Only six districts had a positive net migration rate in 2014, i.e. the number of settlers was higher than the number of those who left. Sofia (Capital City), Burgas, Varna, Haskovo, Kardzhali, and Stara Zagora had such net migration rates, and the immigration in the first three districts maintained more favourable age dependency ratios relative to Bulgaria's average ones. On the other hand, the districts with the fastest ageing population at the end of 2014 were Gabrovo, Kyustendil and Vidin. In these districts, there are more than two people aged 65+ per child aged 0 to 14, and the ratio of those aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 was more than 40%. In comparison, the national average age dependency ratios were much more favourable in 2014: 144.3 and 30.2%, respectively.

Education

As a rule, the underdeveloped territories also perform less well in the field of education. Education in the districts of Montana, Razgrad, Sliven and Silistra got the lowest rating, with a variety of problems: a high share of dropouts and repeaters, poor results at state matriculation exams on graduation from secondary school, lack of higher education establishments or a small number of students, and a low share of people with university degrees. Each of these districts exhibits several or all of the mentioned problems. In Sliven net enrolment is relatively low, too, while teacher – student ratios point to an insufficient number of teachers.

Yet, there are exceptions from the rule that education fails to do well in economically less developed territories, and vice versa. Veliko Tarnovo is one – economically, the region ranks near the bottom, but it has one of the highest ratings in education, mostly due to the reputation of the University of Veliko Tarnovo and the high share of people with tertiary degrees in the local population. The district of Smolyan is another similar example, rated 'unsatisfactory' in economic development, but 'good' in education. These exceptions demonstrate that though social development is often predetermined by economic development, it is possible to achieve good quality and coverage of education even in a less developed local economy.

Healthcare

In healthcare there was a drop of 20% in the cases of hospitalisation in 2014. Though the number of hospitalized patients is used as an indicator for the morbidity rate of the population, the reason for the drop should be sought in the considerably shrunk budget of the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) for that year.

Access to healthcare has gradually increased. The number of beds in MpHATs increased in 17 districts, remained the same in four and decreased in seven in 2014. Due to the continuously dropping population figures, the ratio of hospital beds to population number got worse only in the districts of Burgas, Dobrich and Pazardzhik. One of the more notable increases in the number of hospital beds

Figure 5: Rate of natural increase in 2014 (‰)
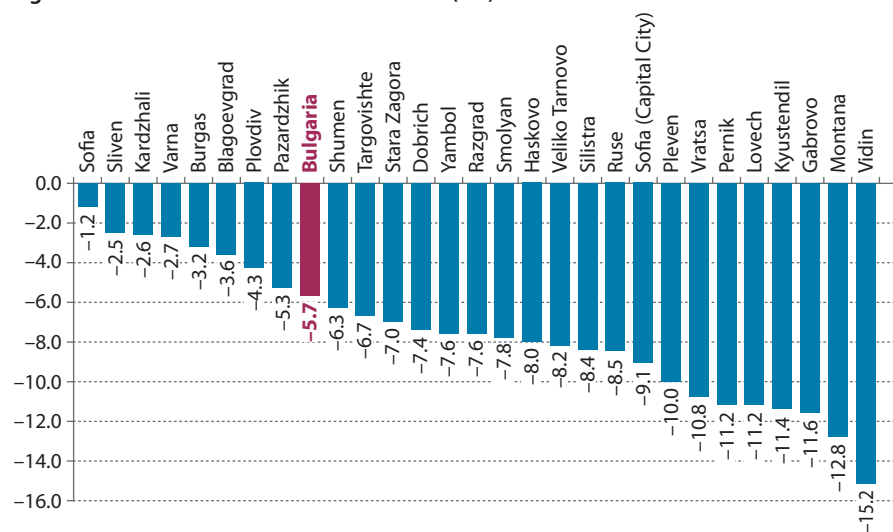
Source: the NSI

Figure 6: 2015 average grades from state matriculation exams in Bulgarian Language and Literature
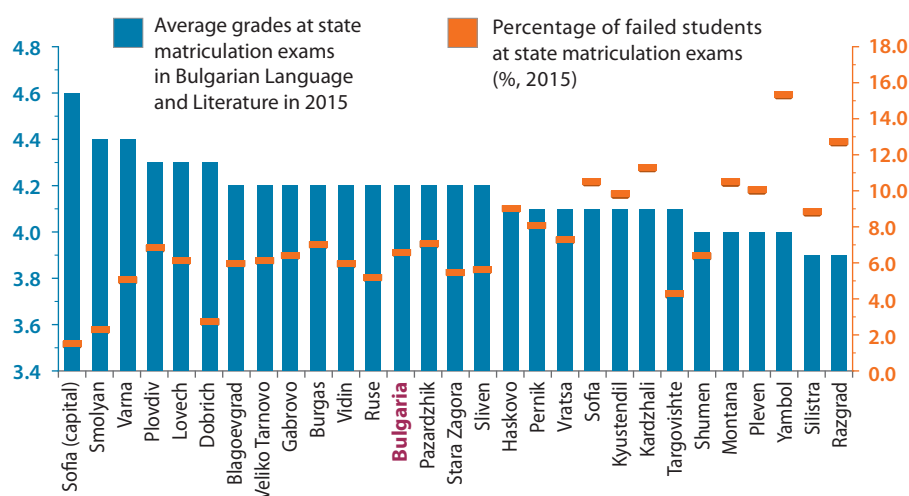
was in Smolyan where the hospital in the town of Devin was reopened in 2014.

The increasing number of cardiologists – for seven years in a row – is yet another positive trend. While there were 878 cardiologists in 2007, their number increased to 1,253 in 2014, which means there were 5,765 people per cardiologist. The number of internists and general practitioners, however, has continued to drop – for three and two years in a row, respectively.

Security and Justice

In security and justice a relation between the economic development and the social environment has been noted throughout the districts, though pointing in the opposite direction. The more economically developed the district, the more problems it faces both in the functioning of the judicial system and in the number of registered crimes against the person and property.

With regard to security and justice, the most developed district, Sofia (Capital City), has the worst indicators. This district, along with Blagoevgrad, Burgas and Varna has some of the lowest ranks in security and in effectiveness of the local judicial power, while all four rank at the top in terms of economic development. On the other hand, Kardzhali, Lovech, Silistra and Smolyan feature low crime rates and relatively efficient local judicial systems, but poor economic development. There are also exceptions – for instance, Gabrovo has one of the best economic indicators and also a comparatively low crime rate, a moderate workload and relative effectiveness of penal judges in the District Court. Kyustendil, Montana and Sliven represent examples of poor economy and also of poor performance in the field of security and justice.

On the whole, the actual workload of penal judges in District Courts decreased between 2011 and 2013 (from 10.8 cases per month in 2010 to 8.3 cases per month in 2013). This trend could be explained, at least partially, with the decreased number of registered crimes against both property and the person in 2013 compared to 2010. Falling crime rates can be noted throughout all districts of Bulgaria, without exception, judging by the number of registered crimes against property. In view of this fact, the reasons for a rising share of pending criminal cases accompanied by a falling share of cases closed in the first 3 months in most districts in 2013, compared to three years earlier, could hardly be explained. The aggravation of these indicators demonstrates decreased effectiveness of the judicial system in most districts.

Environment

Environmental quality is also related to the social environment of the districts. Considerable European funds for projects in environmental protection, more specifically for the construction of sewage and waste water treatment plants, have been absorbed in recent years.

Only in 2013 expenditure on environmental protection was 2.1 billion BGN, which represents an increase of 400 m BGN in comparison with 2012. Nonetheless, the share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems increased only symbolically: from 74.3% in 2012 to 74.7% in 2013. The share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to waste water treatment plants, also demonstrated a meagre advance: from 56.1% in 2012 to 56.4% in 2013. Less than 5% of the population in the districts of Kyustendil, Silistra, Vidin and Yambol is connected to sewage flowing out to waste water treatment plants.

Serving the population with waste water treatment plants is better than the average in the Black Sea districts of Burgas (61.2%), Varna (86.2%) and Dobrich (70.8%), but many of the waste water treatment plants have proved to be insufficient in serving the huge number of tourists during the summer tourist season. This causes leakages of waste water into the sea and negatively impacts the image of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast as a tourist destination.

Air purity constitutes another important element of the environment. Carbon dioxide emissions continu-

Figure 7: Number of registered crimes against property per 10,000 people of the average population in 2014

Source: the MI

above 100   75–100   50–75   under 50
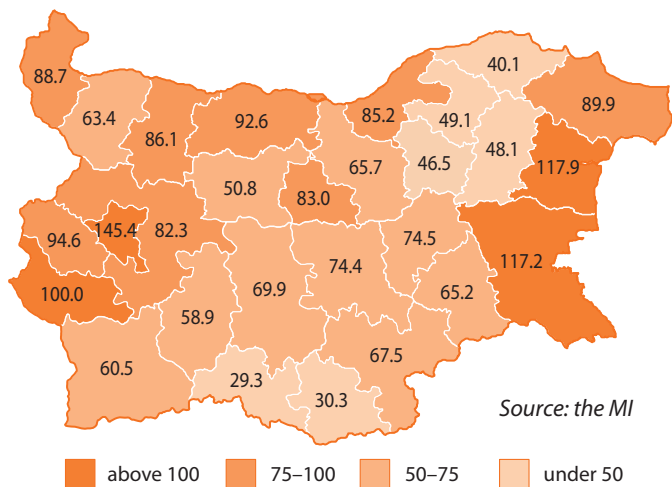
ally dropped in 2012 and 2013, which was especially notable in the district of Stara Zagora. Although it remained the region with the highest concentration of harmful emissions per sq. km in Bulgaria, the emissions decreased to 3,405 t/sq. km in 2013 compared to 4,873 t/sq. km in 2011. Emissions in the other two districts with the most contaminated air, Sofia (Capital City) and Varna, also considerably decreased in 2013. The reasons for their lower levels are both the investments in treatment facilities in industry and the population's

gradual transition from using solid fuel for heating to cleaner sources of power (gas and electricity) with the general increase of living standards.

Culture

Cultural activities also play an important role in the creation and development of the social environment and the living conditions throughout the districts. All observed indicators in the field of culture increased in 2014. Visits to the cinema increased by 337,000 to 5.1 m in 2014 or 706 per one thousand people, which was due in part to the opening of cinemas in several districts that had lacked cinemas till 2014, i.e. Razgrad, Shumen, Smolyan, Silistra and Vidin.

Visits to the theatre have also demonstrated an ongoing trend of increase for the past several years, even though theatre remained less popular with 319 attendances per one thousand people on average for Bulgaria in 2014. Sofia (Capital City), Ruse and Targovishte reported the highest popularity of theatre performances among the local population.

The annual average number of museum and library visits has also grown in recent years. More than 1,000 visits (per 1,000 people) have been reported both to museums and libraries in Sofia (Capital City) and in Veliko Tarnovo. A relatively high interest in museum exhibitions has been noted in the districts of Dobrich, Gabrovo, Sofia and Vidin.

Figure 8: Registered visits to cinemas and theatres per 1,000 people of the average annual population in 2014

Visists to the cinemas

Visits to the theatres

Visits to the museums

Visits to the libraries

Source: the NSI
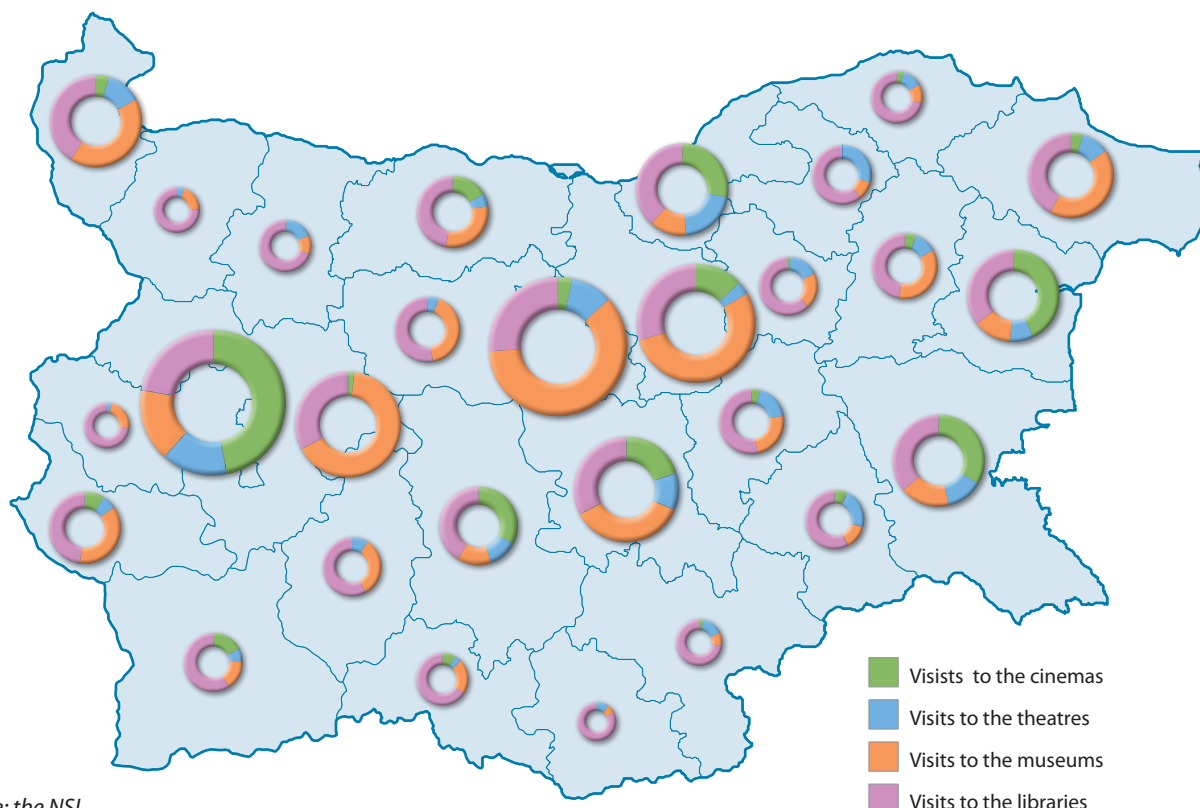
Clustering of Districts according to Their Socioeconomic State

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alexander Tsvetkov, Regiostat

An important task, when characterising regional development, is to find specific types of regional profiles which can help identify the differences and similarities between the districts by studying the joint impact of the indicators characterizing their socioeconomic state.

The complex indicators for the 12 categories of the analysis have been used as basic criteria when defining and structuring the regional profiles. These are: income and living conditions, labour market, investment, infrastructure, taxes and fees, administration, demography, education, healthcare, security and justice, environment, culture.

The cluster analysis of the districts' state and development used so far, has been supplemented and enhanced. The outlining of the types of regional profiles has been done connecting factor analysis to neural networks. One advantage of factor analysis is its ability to reduce the initial set of indicators to a smaller number of summarised factors called main components. These factors are also called hidden because they are not obvious in the original array of indicators. Each of these hidden factors, or main components, can be considered as a set of sufficiently interrelated initial indicators, some of which have a leading and defining role in its formation. For instance, the initial complex metrics regarding investment, income and security define the Incomes and Security factor commented on further in the text.

The main components method allows to characterise the districts without significant loss of initial information and allows certain typologies to be highlighted on the basis of hidden (not obvious prior to the reduction) factors – the main components. This enables the analysis of the districts' state in terms of any hidden factor. Since the linear correlations between the factors are zero in using the main components method for factor analysis, it becomes possible to interpret the factors as independent, which in turn allows to show the share of differences (variations) between the districts, or the result of the effect of each hidden factor. The interrelations between the individual initial indicators are highlighted, which allows to analyse their mutual influences and the use of the latter as means of drafting effective policies.

The types of regional profiles, as well as the identified main components with their constituent initial indicators, can be used for identifying complex positive or negative phenomena, in disclosing and analysing the causes that have given rise to these phenomena, in formulating general or sectoral policies, etc.

DIFFERENCES IN DISTRICTS' SOCIOECONOMIC STATES

Four hidden factors or main components have been identified as a result of the factor analysis. Their relative influence (the share in per cent) when estimating the differences (the variance) between districts and the defining initial indicators are presented in the figure below[2]:

Figure 9: Main components (hidden factors), their defining initial indicators and the share of the variance (the differences) resulting from the respective factor (%)

INCOMES AND SECURITY	WORKFORCE AND SELF-GOVERNANCE
28%	**20%**
✔ Security and Justice ✔ Investment ✔ Incomes and Living Conditions	✔ Demography ✔ Labour Market ✔ Taxes and Fees

INFRASTRUCTURE	SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT
13%	**12%**
✔ Infrastructure	✔ Healthcare ✔ Education

N o t e: the indicators marked in red are inversely related to the main component. The total variance affected by the hidden factors is 73%.

[2] The complete list of initial indicators, the comprising main components, as well as the correlation ratios demonstrating the intensity and direction of their relation to the initial indicators, are presented in Fig. 10 of the Appendix.

The order in which the factors are arranged demonstrates their relevance in outlining the differences between the districts. Economic development, measured via the Income and Security factor, is of primary importance. The quality of the workforce, the demographic potential and the abilities of local self-government to provide a favourable environment through the levels of local taxes and fees come second in terms of relevance – the Workforce and Self-government factor. The state of the infrastructure ranks third, and the state of the healthcare and educational systems comes forth – the Social Environment factor.

The first hidden factor – semantically interpreted as Income and Security – summarises the indicators for income and investment and defines nearly 30% of the variances between them. On the other hand, economic development turns out to be inversely related to problems of security and justice. It can be concluded from the data that investors are much more influenced by factors other than the level of security when deciding about an investment location.

The better one district performs in economic terms, the more problems it faces both in the functioning of the judicial system and the registered crimes against individuals and property.

The city of Sofia is the most developed district. In terms of incomes and investments, Burgas ranks second, and Gabrovo takes the third place, but the difference between the first and the second one is more than two times, while the differences between the districts that follow are much smaller. This additionally confirms the conclusions made in previous publications that Sofia (Capital City) considerably differs from the rest of the country.

The state of justice and security affects the districts that occupy the bottom ranks – the 'last' two districts (Kardzhali and Smolyan) perform best in respect of security and justice. With regard to security and justice, Sofia (Capital City) features the worst indicators.

The demographic state, the labour market and the levels of local taxes and fees constitute the second factor: Workforce and Self-government. This factor affects about 20% of the variance between the districts. The municipalities located in districts where demographic states are relatively better (compared to the other ones, but affected by the generally unfavourable demographic situation) and so are labour market conditions, can obviously afford higher local taxes and fees, which is why this indicator has been negatively correlated. On the other hand, municipalities located in districts with worse demographic indicators and worse labour market situations strive to compete (where at all possible) with the rest by introducing lower taxes and fees. This approach currently does not have any significant effect, since the levels of taxes and fees constitute only one of many factors influencing both investment decisions and decisions for settling or leaving.

The differences between districts concerning this main component are not that significant compared to the first main component, as can be seen in Figure 11 (please note diameter differences).

The Infrastructure factor is presented by a single initial indicator that represents the complex metrics regarding the state of the infrastructure. It is the cause for 13% of the differences between the districts.

The districts of Ruse and Gabrovo possess the best infrastructure. The districts of Razgrad and Silistra, which

Figure 10: The five districts with the highest values for the Income and Security main component and the five districts with the lowest ones
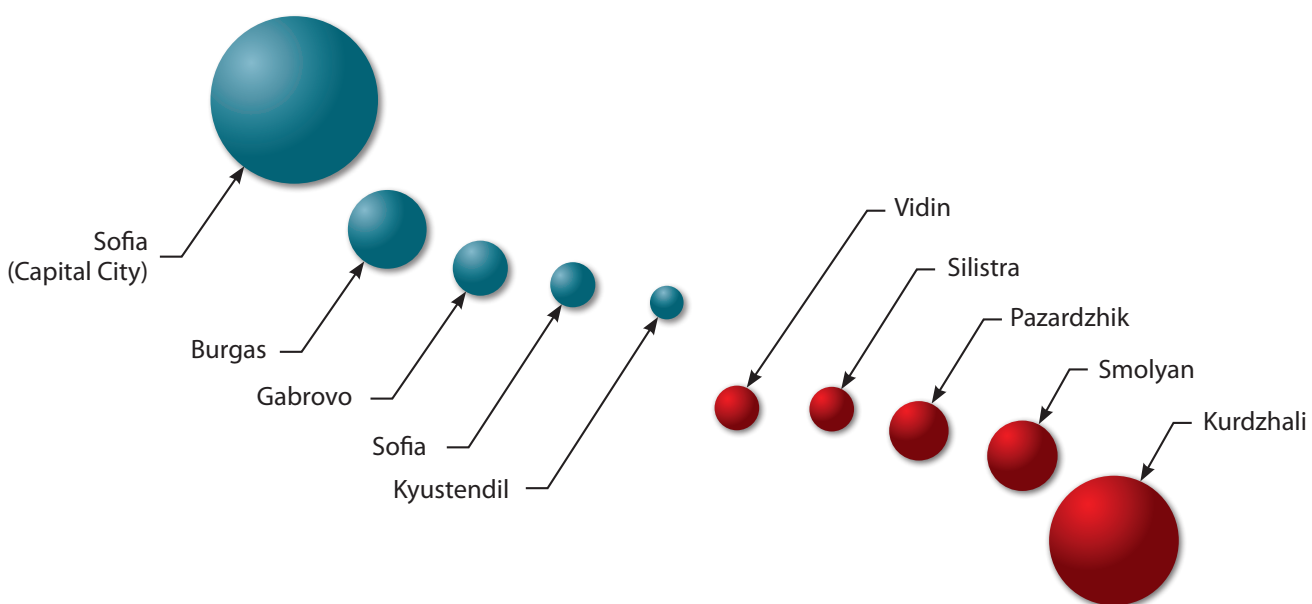
Sofia (Capital City)

Burgas

Gabrovo

Sofia

Kyustendil

Vidin

Silistra

Pazardzhik

Smolyan

Kurdzhali

N o t e: the varying diameters demonstrate the scope of differences between the districts.

Figure 11: The five districts with the highest values for the Workforce and Self-government main component and the five districts with the lowest ones
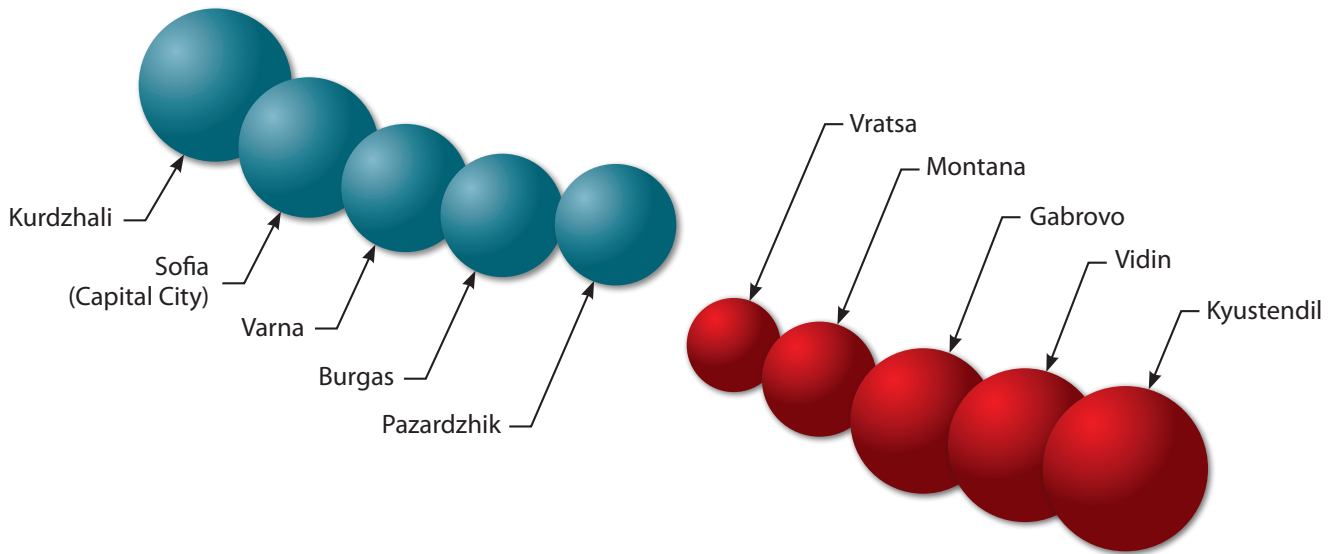
N o t e: the varying diameters demonstrate the scope of differences between the districts.

have relatively poor social and demographic states, rank among the top five in infrastructure.

Infrastructure is worst in Vratsa, followed by Burgas. The differences are bigger than those in the Workforce and Self-government factor, but smaller than those in the first factor.

The differences between districts, in terms of this main component, are presented in Figure 12:

Lastly, the fourth hidden factor, interpreted as Social Environment, determines about 12% of the differences between the districts. It is dominated by the initial indicators for healthcare and education.

Here, differences are considerable, as with the first factor. Smolyan District is followed by Sofia (Capital City), and the difference is double. The differences between the second and the following districts are not that big.

Figure 12: The five districts with the highest values for the Infrastructure main component and the five districts with the lowest ones
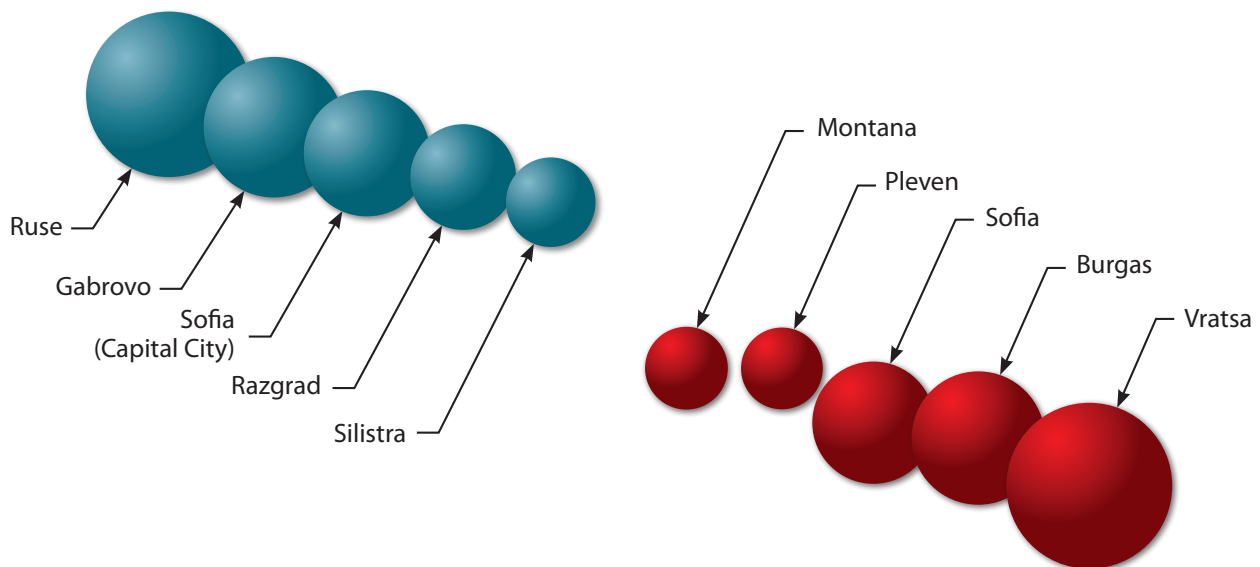
N o t e: the varying diameters demonstrate the scope of differences between the districts.

Figure 13: The five districts with the highest values for the Social Environment main component and the five districts with the lowest ones
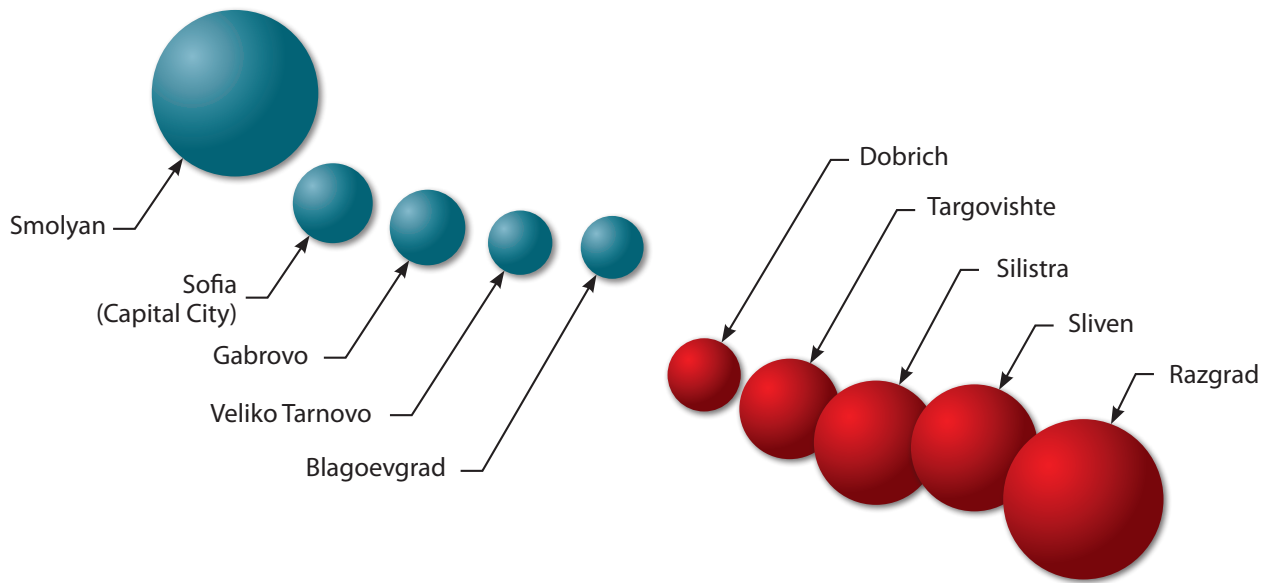
N o t e: the varying diameters demonstrate the scope of differences between the districts.

The districts of Razgrad, Silistra and Sliven have the worst social environment in healthcare and educational systems.

TYPES OF DISTRICT PROFILES

After identifying and interpreting the four hidden factors, the main components, the neural networks method has been applied in order to outline the types of regional profiles. As a result 8 clusters, or types of regional profiles, are formed.

Although the number of clusters is the same as in the preceding two years, the methodological changes made should be taken account of when interpreting the clusters. Now the identified four hidden factors have been used for outlining the clusters, while in previous years the initial indicators had been used. Furthermore, there are changes in the initial set, and new indicators have been included.

Of course, there are differences in the clusters' composition. The cluster consisting of Sofia (Capital City) is the only exception, which has stayed the same for

all three years of the monitored period (2012–2015). In analysing the types of regional profiles the emphasis was on showing what was typical of the formed clusters, as in each field of analysis a detailed description of the overall socioeconomic state of the districts was provided.

The following types of regional profiles (districts groups/clusters) featuring varying socioeconomic states were specified as a result of the procedures completed via the neural networks method:

- Very good socioeconomic state
- Good overall demographic state
- Poor demographic state, best infrastructure
- Poor demographic state, poor infrastructure
- Relatively poor infrastructure and social environment
- Highest degree of security
- Worsened economy, worst social environment, good infrastructure
- Without a typical profile

Very Good Socioeconomic State: the City of Sofia

Once again Sofia (Capital City) has formed an individual cluster. This cluster differs considerably from the rest since this is the most developed district socioeconomically.

The cluster features the most developed economy (in terms of income and investment), the best general demographic state and the strongest labour market. The district is among those performing best in infrastructure and social environment (education and healthcare). It stands out as the only district with such characteristics.

The district has the highest GDP per capita. In 2012, the value of this indicator was two times higher than the district ranking next (Sofia District) and almost five times higher than the one in the last district – Silistra.

The district features the highest average salary and the biggest investments as expenses for acquiring fixed tangible assets per capita and as foreign direct investments per capita.

The average salary in Sofia (Capital City) was higher by 40% than the country average in 2013 and twice as big as the salary of the bottom ranking district – Vidin.

In 2013, the expenditure for acquiring fixed tangible assets per capita was 2.2 times higher than the country average and 8 times higher than the bottom ranking district – Vidin. Foreign direct investments per capita were three times bigger than the country average and 33 times bigger than the worst performing district (Montana) as at the end of 2013.

The district has the highest employment rate and also the poorest state in terms of security and justice – the number of registered crimes against property per 10,000 people was 60% higher than the country average in 2014. The actual workload of penal judges was

also high (about two times higher than the country average in 2013).

Generally Good Demographic State: Burgas, Haskovo, Pazardzhik, Plovdiv, Shumen, Varna

The defining characteristic of this cluster is the generally good demographic state. Three of the districts in the cluster are among the leading ones in Bulgaria.
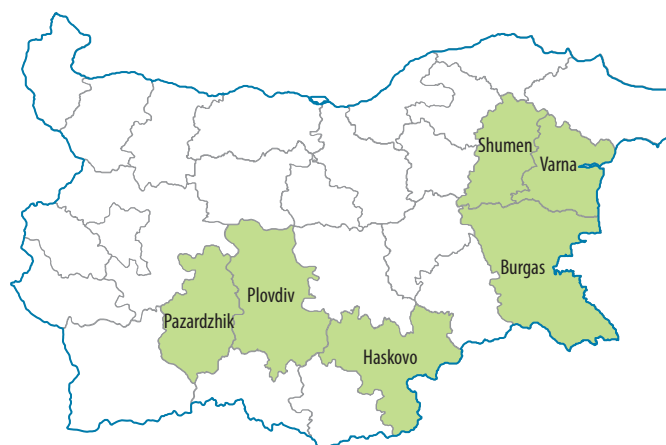
The districts in this cluster have a relatively low natural rate of decrease of the population and also a relatively good age structure. The levels of local taxes and fees are comparatively high in most of them.

The districts of Varna and Burgas rank 4th and 5th, and Plovdiv District ranks 7th according to the rate of natural increase of the population.

Varna District ranks 3rd, Pazardzhik District is 7th, and Shumen District – 8th, with comparatively favourable ratios between the population of higher age groups (65+) and the young population (aged 0–14, and 15–64 respectively), which still presupposes a relatively good but stagnating opportunity for population reproduction.

Most of the cluster districts have higher taxes than the country average for properties of legal entities, the tax on cars and vehicles and the tax on the transfer of property.

Poor Demographic State, Best Infrastructure: Gabrovo, Ruse

The poor demographic state of both districts – with a contrasing very good infrastructure – is typical for this profile. The districts of Ruse and Gabrovo rank first and second, respectively, among all others in infrastructure development. Only the districts of Lovech, Vidin and Vratsa feature poorer indicators in terms of demography compared to Gabrovo.

Another characteristic of the cluster districts is the lowest local taxes and fees.
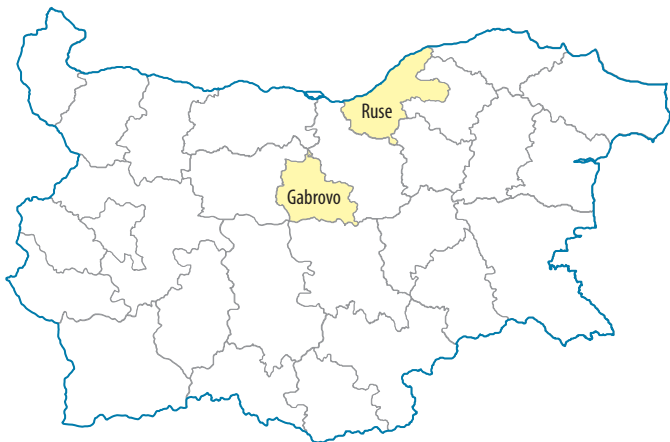
Gabrovo District also has the most deteriorated age structure in Bulgaria. The ratio of the population aged 65+ toward the population aged 0–14 is higher by 60 pp than the country average. Only the districts of Montana and Vidin have a poorer natural increase.

Concerning the workforce, Gabrovo District has the second lowest coefficient of demographic replacement (the ratio of the population aged 15–19 to the one aged 60–64), which poses great problems in workforce reproduction.

Gabrovo District features the highest road network density, and Ruse District ranks second in railway network density. Both districts are among the top four in relative share of households with Internet access.

Ruse District has the lowest taxes on properties of legal entities and on cars and vehicles.

Poor Demographic State, Poor Infrastructure: Kyustendil, Vratsa

A poor demographic state coupled with poor infrastructure characterises this profile. Kyustendil District ranks last in general demographic state, and Vratsa District has the most deteriorated infrastructure.
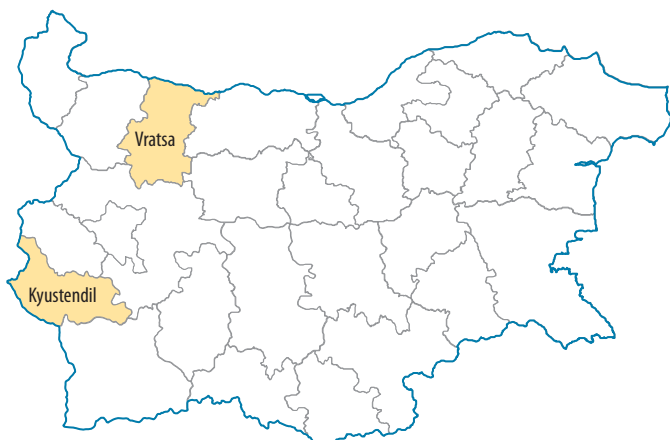
Kyustendil has the third worst age structure – the ratio between the population aged 65+ and the one aged 0–14 was more than two times in 2014. Both districts have low natural increase and negative migration balance. Vratsa ranks second, and Kyustendil ranks fourth in terms of the worst migration balance, i.e. more people leave than settle.

Both districts have the smallest relative share of households with Internet access – it is lower by 20% than the country average and almost two times lower than the leading district, Sofia (Capital City).

Vratsa District has the poorest quality of roads – barely 21% were in good condition in 2014, the country average being 40% and 80% in the top ranking district – Sliven.

Relatively Poor Infrastructure and Social Environment: Dobrich, Montana, Sofia, Targovishte

A comparatively deteriorated general state of both infrastructure and social environment characterise this cluster – the cluster districts perform below the country average with regard to both hidden factors.

Most of the cluster districts have poorer railway network density compared to the country average. The same applies to the relative share of people (aged 16 to 74) to have used the Internet for the past 12 months of 2014.
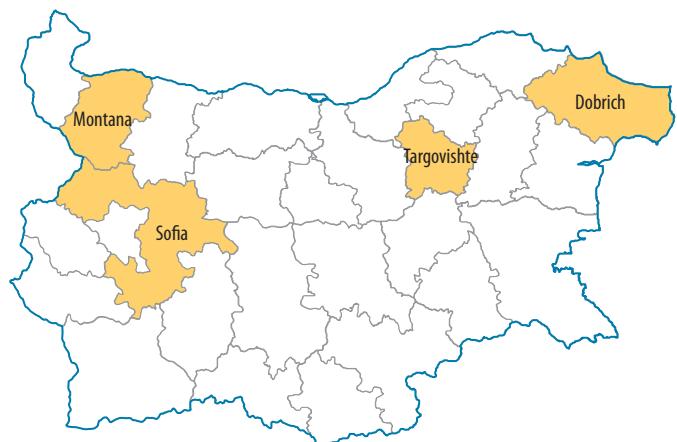
There is no college or university in Montana and Targovishte, and the number of students at colleges and universities per 1,000 people is lower than the nationwide figures. Dobrich, Montana and Targovishte are among the top districts in dropouts from primary and secondary schools.

Most Secure: Kardzhali and Smolyan

The cluster heading specifies its typical feature. The two districts that comprise the cluster are first and sec-

ond respectively, in the general state of security and justice.

Kardzhali District was in a relatively good demographic state and in a generally good state of the labour market in 2014; Smolyan District had the best social environment concerning healthcare and education.

Kardzhali District ranked first in criminal cases closed in the first 3 months (99% in 2013), and Smolyan District ranked fourth (96%). Both districts had the smallest number of registered crimes against individuals per 10,000 people among all other districts in 2014 – three times lower than the country average and almost five times lower than the district with the highest number of such crimes – Montana. The same applies to the registered crimes against property per 10,000 people of the average population.

Kardzhali District reported the lowest level of unemployment in Bulgaria and was among the best-performing districts in employment rate in 2014.

Both districts topped the ranking for the number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students in 2014. Their number was higher than the country average by about a quarter and by 41% than the worst-performing district – Yambol.

The same also applies to the relative share of repeaters. In 2014 it was only 0.3% in Smolyan and 0.5% in Kardzhali.

In 2015 Smolyan ranked second, after Sofia (Capital City), in average grade from state matriculation exams.

Deteriorated Economy, the Worst Social Environment, Good Infrastructure: Razgrad, Sliven and Silistra

The poorest state of the social environment (education and healthcare) characterises this profile. The three districts the cluster consists of have the most deteriorated

social environment among all other districts in Bulgaria. Levels of income and investment per capita are also way below the country average.

On the other hand, the infrastructure condition is relatively good.

In 2015, Razgrad and Silistra have the poorest grades from state matriculation exams – about 3.9 compared to 4.2 for Bulgaria and 4.6 for the leader, Sofia (Capital City).

Sliven had the second biggest number of repeaters in 2014 and the biggest share of students to drop out of primary and secondary schools in 2013. In 2014, the district ranked second with the smallest number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students. In 2015, Razgrad ranked second in grades lower than 3.00 from state matriculation exams. In 2014, Silistra was the district with the lowest relative share of the population aged 25–64 with university degrees.
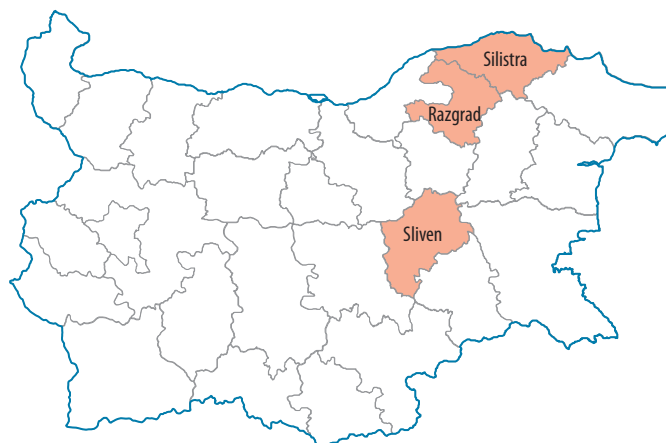
In 2014 Razgrad District featured the highest number of people per general practitioner in Bulgaria, and Silistra – the highest number of individuals per specialist in internal medicine. Both districts were among the ones with the highest number of individuals per cardiologist – first, and third respectively.

Sliven District featured the highest infant mortality rate in 2014 – 15.4‰, and also the highest poverty level in 2012: 31.6%, compared to 21.0% for the entire country.

Silistra District had the smallest GDP per capita (in 2012) and the lowest income per household member in 2014: two times smaller than that of the best-performing district, Sofia (Capital City).

According to the relative share of individuals aged between 16 and 74, who had used the Internet for the past 12 months, Razgrad ranked second following Sofia (Capital City) in 2014; in road quality Sliven District topped the ranking.

Lacking any Specific Profile:
Blagoevgrad, Lovech, Pernik, Pleven, Stara Zagora, Veliko Tarnovo, Vidin and Yambol

This cluster lacks any typical feature that would characterise it. The socioeconomic state of the comprising districts varies about the country average. Only Vidin District is an exception with one of the most deteriorated demographic backgrounds and one of the most depressed labour markets.

Vidin District had the least favourable ratio of the population aged 65+ toward the population aged 15–64 in 2014 and the second worst ratio of the population aged 65+ toward the population aged 0–14. This has caused extremely severe problems in ageing of the population and its reproduction. The district had the lowest rate of natural increase and the second highest rate of unemployment in 2014.

SUMMARY

On the basis of the performed factor analysis for assessing the impact of various factors on the districts' socioeconomic development and the clusters formed, the following could be summarised:

Sofia (Capital City) stands out from the other districts in Bulgaria and tops the ranking in socioeconomic terms. Throughout the entire period of research, it has formed its own cluster with significant variances in the values of the indicators studied in comparison with the rest of the districts.

For yet another year the districts of Razgrad and Silistra have confirmed their poor socioeconomic state.

Both positive and negative characteristics regarding various aspects of the districts' socioeconomic state – excluding the cluster of Sofia (Capital City) – have been noted for all types of profiles. Sofia is the only district with a generally favourable socioeconomic profile.

The range of profiles featuring a poor socioeconomic state remains larger than the ones featuring a relatively good state.

Economic development is directly related to problems in the field of security and justice. Decisions about investment locations are much more influenced by factors other than the level of security and justice.

The approach of compensating poor demographic metrics by means of low local taxes and fees, via possible attraction of investors and settlers, has not brought any significant result. This could be due to the fact that the levels of taxes and fees constitute only one of many factors that influence both investment decisions and the decision for settling or leaving.

APPENDIX

Figure 14: Main components, initial indicators comprising them and correlation ratios demonstrating intensity and direction of the related connection

Initial indicators	MAIN COMPONENTS			
	Income and security	Workforce and self-governance	Infrastructure	Social Environment
Income and Living Conditions	0.692	0.113	0.340	0.299
Labour Market	0.331	0.835	0.092	0.180
Investment	0.776	0.397	0.037	0.169
Infrastructure	0.176	0.113	0.853	−0.071
Taxes and Fees	−0.146	−0.814	0.051	0.020
Administration	0.647	0.231	0.204	−0.007
Demography	0.308	0.850	0.188	0.010
Education	0.409	0.220	0.330	0.726
Healthcare	0.225	0.026	−0.178	0.816
Security and Justice	−0.786	−0.034	0.084	0.120
Environment	0.682	0.017	−0.438	0.319
Culture	0.568	0.139	0.563	0.203

Blagoevgrad District

▶ Population (2014)	316,843
▶ Area (sq. km)	6,449.5
▶ Number of settlements	281
▶ Share of urban population (%)	59.6

Overview

The indicators for social inclusion and living conditions in Blagoevgrad District are relatively favourable, but incomes remain low, and investment activity increases slowly. The population's economic activity is high, but the employment rate has continued to drop, and the unemployment rate has increased since 2009. Blagoevgrad District offers one of the most favourable preconditions for doing business in terms of the level of local taxes and fees, but administrative services are not satisfactory.

The district's social development is good. Access to key health professionals is relatively easy, but the ratio between their number and the population number has deteriorated over the past year. The environment is in a good state, although the district lags behind in provision of waste water treatment plants to the population. Blagoevgrad remains one of the leading university centres in Bulgaria, but the share of graduates is relatively low, meaning that the district fails to keep young graduates. It is one of the districts with the highest share of pending criminal cases in the District Court despite the low actual workload of judges. The district demography is still favourable but deteriorates quickly.

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
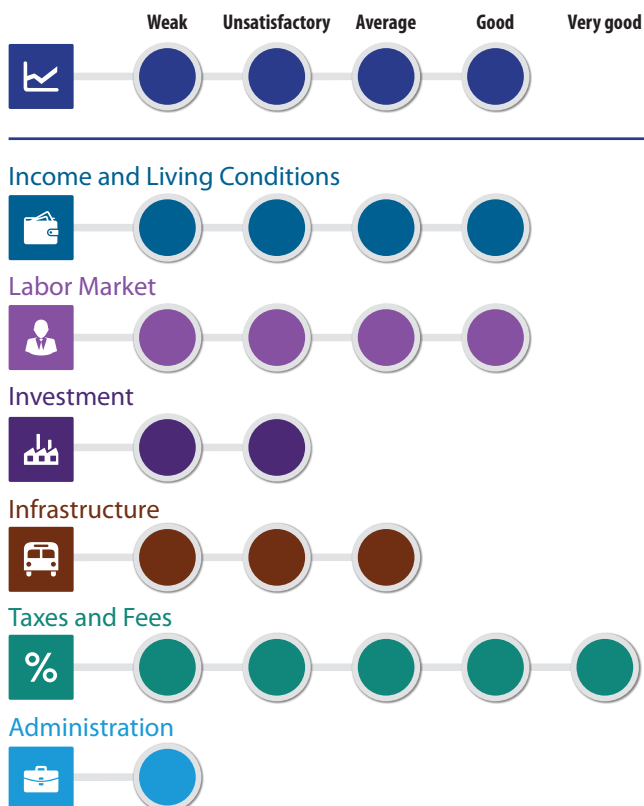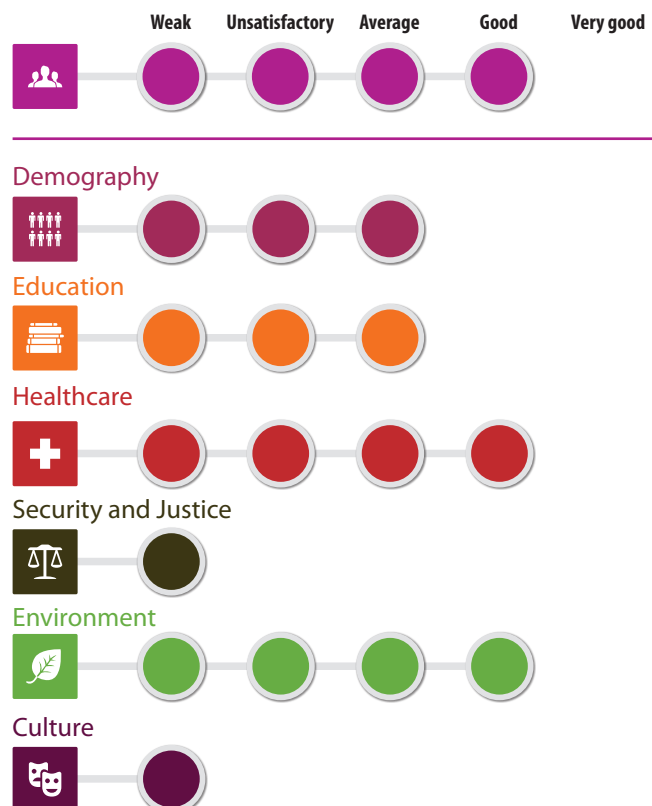
📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

👛 Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

Blagoevgrad constitutes one of the districts with the most favourable indicators in social inclusion and living conditions. The relative share of the poor population was 15.3% in 2012, the country average being 21.0%, while 31.4% lived in material deprivation compared to 43.0% in the country as a whole. In 2012, the share of the population living in households with low work intensity reached 4.3% but it remained over two times lower than the nationwide figure. In 2012, GDP per capita was 7,398 BGN, the country average being 10,958 BGN. In 2014, the annual average income per household member increased to 4,181 BGN compared to 4,132 BGN in 2013; it now amounts to 87% of the country average. Salaries remained among the lowest in Bulgaria, but relatively high incomes from self-employment compensate them.

👤 Labour Market ●●●●

The labour market state in Blagoevgrad District has continued to deteriorate; only the good pre-crisis indicators allow the district to retain its good assessment in this category.

Blagoevgrad has traditionally been one of the districts with the highest economic activity. In 2014, higher levels were noted solely in Sofia (Capital City), Smolyan and Shumen. Simultaneously, the unemployment rate has increased for six years in a row to reach 14.1% in 2014, while the employment rate reported one of the lowest levels since 2004 – 50.6%.

There are 67 people aged 15–19 per every 100 people aged 60–64. Thus, the demographic replacement rate (67.1%) in the district is more favourable than it is nationwide, which is 61.9%. Nonetheless, Blagoevgrad, Kardzhali and Smolyan are the districts with the fastest deteriorating ratios.

🏭 Investment ●●

Investment has gradually grown more active in the district, though still far below 2007–2008 levels. FDI inflow dropped in the district in 2010 and 2011 but it recovered in the following two years, when a total of approximately 100 m euros were attracted. Nevertheless, their accrued level has remained three times lower than Bulgaria's average of 3,230 euros per capita. FTA expenditure of enterprises reached its 2009 level but is still far below its pre-crisis values.

As of 31 January 2015, municipalities managed to absorb 157.6 m BGN as beneficiaries under EU operational programmes. This averaged 497.4 BGN per capita in the district, 564.9 BGN being Bulgaria's average. The municipalities of Bansko and Gotse Delchev have shown the fastest rate of drawdown (2,474.9 BGN per capita, and 812.4 BGN per capita respectively), while the municipalities of Hadzhidimovo and Satovcha feature the slowest rate of utilisation (95.6 BGN per capita, 113.6 BGN per capita respectively).

🚌 Infrastructure ●●●

Due to the predominating alpine topography, Blagoevgrad District has the lowest road network density in Bulgaria – just 10.3 km of roads per 100 sq. km of territory. The railway network density is low as well – 2.5 km per 100 sq. km. The share of roads in good condition deteriorated for the third year in a row and it was 49.1% in 2014 compared to 56.6% in 2011. However, these levels are higher than the country average of 40.5%. The gradual commissioning of the incomplete sections of the Struma Highway will enhance the infrastructural profile of the district.

62% of households have access to the Internet; this is the fifth highest share in Bulgaria. The relative share of people who had used the Internet in 2014 was close to the nationwide average of 59%.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●●

Blagoevgrad District offers some of the most favourable preconditions for doing business in terms of the level of local taxes and fees. Most of them are lower than Bulgaria's average ones, and there have been few changes since 2012.

Only the annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities is higher compared to the country's average. This charge is the highest in the municipalities of Petrich, Simitli and Strumyani. Simultaneously, this has been the only local charge to go down in the past several years – in Sandanski (from 7.70 to 5.03 ‰) and Strumyani (from 14.00 to 11.00 ‰).

Exclusive of the annual license tax for retailers, the level of local taxes and fees remains low in the district's centre – the municipality of Blagoevgrad.

💼 Administration ●

The municipalities of Bansko and Blagoevgrad rank highest – 69.4 and 64.0, out of the maximum 88.4 points – in the Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. Belitsa (12.2) and Hadzhidimovo (16.1) rank lowest.

Most of the municipalities in the district provide one-stop shop services, but ensuing analyses and checks are relatively rarely applied. E-services are best developed in the Bansko municipality. A large number of the other municipalities offer online basic information only, without any possibilities for concluding transactions with individuals and businesses.

In 2014, the cadastral map covered 12.9% of the district's territory compared to 18.1% for Bulgaria.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ● ● ●

Demography ● ● ●

Population age structure in Blagoevgrad District's is more favourable than it is in most other districts; the prominent presence of universities in the district contributes for this age structure. Till 2013 Blagoevgrad and Sofia were the only districts where there were at least four persons of working age per individual aged 65+. In 2014 the age dependency ratio (the ratio of people aged 65+ toward people aged 15–64) was 25.6% in Blagoevgrad District and remained one of the lowest in Bulgaria.

The rate of natural increase has remained negative since 2001 and the ratio between the death rate and the birth-rate was most unfavourable in 2014.

Although barely 60% of the population lives in towns and cities (Bulgaria's average being 73.1%), the population density relative to the urbanised territories is the third highest in the country following Plovdiv and Sofia (Capital City).

Education ● ● ●

School education in Blagoevgrad District features a low relative share of repeaters (0.9% compared to the national average of 1.4%) and dropouts from primary and secondary schools (1.6%), and also a high net enrolment rate. School-leavers achieved a slightly higher average grade than the country average at state matriculation exams throughout the period from 2012 to 2015.

Blagoevgrad ranks among the leading university centres in Bulgaria. There were 13,200 students in the district in 2014. Nevertheless, the low relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (19.6% compared to 27.0% for Bulgaria in 2014) demonstrates that most students who have studied in the district, have not stayed there.

Healthcare ● ● ● ●

The higher ranking of Blagoevgrad District in the field of healthcare is due to the improved access to health professionals in 2014. The number of general practitioners, cardiologists and internists has increased. Nonetheless, the district still needs 54 cardiologists – they were 27 in 2014 – in order to reach the country's average of 5,800 people per cardiologist.

The ratio of the number of beds in multi-profile hospitals to the local population has also improved (3.2 beds per 1,000 people in 2014), though it still remains the sixth poorest in the country. The improvement was due to the addition of more than 100 hospital beds in multi-profile hospitals in 2013 and 2014. The share of health-insured

persons reached 86.3% in 2014, which neared Bulgaria's average of 87.1%.

Security and Justice ●

The crime rate has been relatively limited in the district since 2001. The number of registered crimes against persons and property in relation to the local population has been smaller than Bulgaria's average. The years 2009 and 2010 – when the crimes against individuals, in relation to the local population, were higher than the average figures – are an exception.

Despite the relatively low actual workload of penal judges in the Blagoevgrad District Court (7.3 cases per judge per month, the country average being 8.3), this was the district with the highest share of pending criminal cases in 2013: 13.5% compared to the nationwide average of 8.5%. The lack of sufficient efficiency of the judicial system is also visible from the fact that 80% of the criminal cases are completed within three months, the country average being 88.4%.

Environment ● ● ● ●

The district's environment is one of the cleanest in Bulgaria. Relatively lower than 16.6 t/sq. km levels of carbon dioxide emissions were only observed in four districts: Dobrich, Kardzhali, Montana and Smolyan; the country average was 293.9 t/sq. km in 2013).

Although the share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems is high (77%), the population connectivity with waste water treatment plants is still low. Waste water treatment plants served 26.5% of the households connected to sewage in 2013, compared to 56.4% for Bulgaria. The modernisation of Blagoevgrad's waste water treatment plant near the Strumsko Neighbourhood was completed in the summer of 2015.

Culture ●

Blagoevgrad District reported visits to cinemas, theatres, museums and libraries about half of the national averages. In comparison with a clear trend of increase in the number of visits to cinemas and theatres nationwide, Blagoevgrad District reported a drop in both indicators. In 2014, visits to theatres went down from 42,000 to 39,000, while cinema visits dropped from 103,000 to 97,000. An increase was noted in visits to museums and libraries in 2014, but the district still lags considerably behind the country average levels.

Key Indicators for the District of Blagoevgrad

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,276	5,920	7,168	7,398	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,107	3,077	3,225	3,823	4,132	4,181
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,423	5,683	5,990	6,271	6,566	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	10.2	14.4	12.4	15.3	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	57.3	56.9	57.8	59.3	59.4	58.9
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	55.4	53.6	52.9	53.1	51.4	50.6
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	3.4	5.8	8.4	10.4	13.5	14.1
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	49	50	50	53	55	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,319	1,049	1,228	1,105	1,335	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	770	771	798	957	1,116	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	20.8	24.3	42.3	54.9	60.5	61.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	39.0	56.6	55.0	51.9	49.1
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	9.2	10.4	11.3	11.3	12.8	12.9

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−0.4	−1.8	−2.1	−2.6	−2.7	−3.6
Net migration rate (‰)	−2.3	−4.4	−3.2	−4.8	−3.7	−4.5
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	15.3	15.9	16.6	17.7	18.0	19.6
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.3	4.2	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.4
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	5.0	4.4	3.5	5.4	3.8	2.7
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	89.0	86.4	86.6	86.1	84.9	86.3
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	133.4	126.6	127.1	159.7	168.6	143.5
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	80.1	83.4	80.8	72.2	72.4	60.5
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	19.8	17.3	1.5	11.9	13.5	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	104.1	86.5	70.0	95.8	178.3	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	25.6	25.8	26.3	26.3	26.5	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	220.7	266.5	285.0	307.9	322.7	307.5
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	80.7	110.1	112.7	104.4	131.3	124.4

Burgas District

▶ Population (2014)	414,335
▶ Area (sq. km)	7,748.1
▶ Number of settlements	261
▶ Share of urban population (%)	74.9
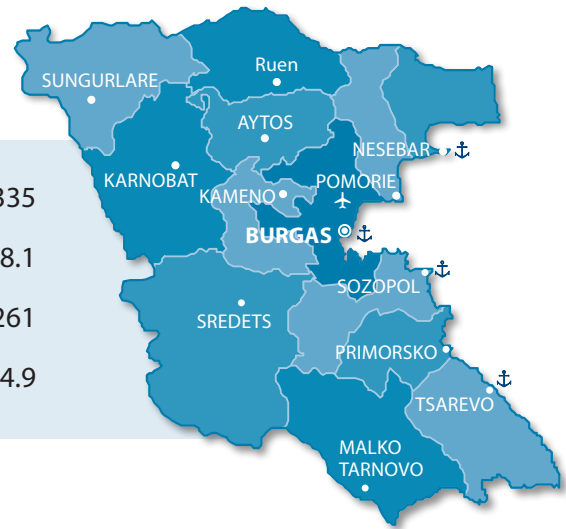
Overview

The economy of Burgas is among the best developed in Bulgaria. Incomes in the district lag behind, though salaries have risen in recent years. The economic activity of the population and the employment rate recovered from 2011 to 2014, and the unemployment rate shrank in 2014. Burgas District features high inflow of foreign capitals and a very good drawdown of EU funds on behalf of municipalities. Some local taxes in resort municipalities remain high. There are also problems with administrative services.

The demographic challenges are not that exacerbated compared to the rest of the country; this is one of the small number of districts featuring a positive net migration rate of the population. Indicators for school education have slightly worsened – the share of dropouts and repeaters has risen, and so have failures at the state matriculation exams. The share of graduates in the workforce remains low in comparison with the country average. Burgas is among the districts with the highest crime rates. Expenditure on environmental protection has considerably increased, which is related to the good drawdown of EU funds.

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
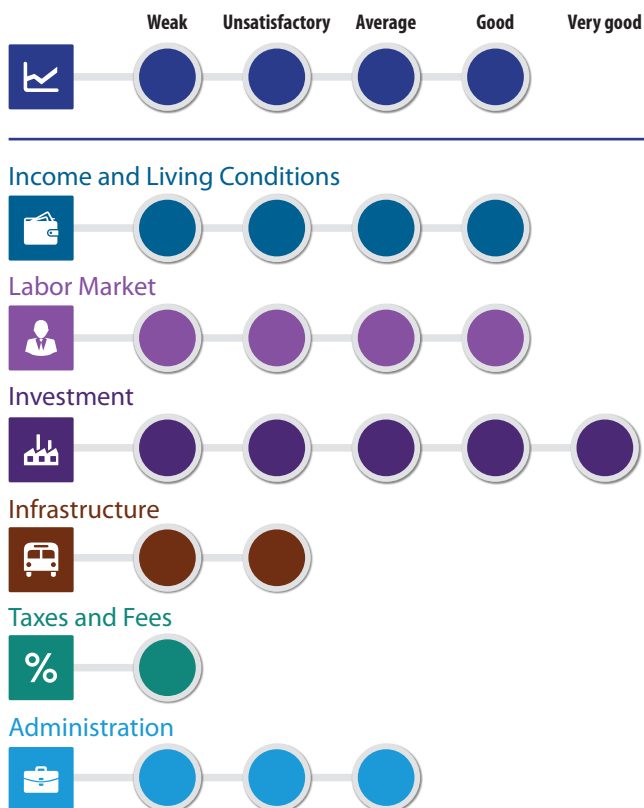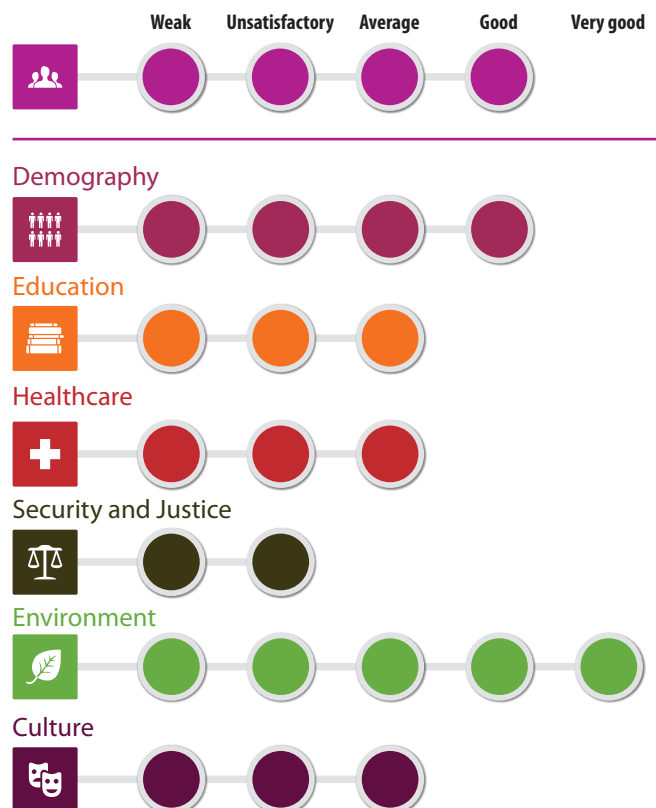
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ● ● ● ●

📇 Income and Living Conditions ● ● ● ●

GDP per capita in Burgas was 9,375 BGN in 2012, which ranked Burgas the fifth richest district in Bulgaria. Incomes in the district have slightly lagged behind country average figures, but comparatively high incomes from pensions are noted. The annual gross salary per employed person rose to reach 8,212 BGN in 2013.

In 2012, 43.1% of the district's residents lived in material deprivation, i.e. they faced difficulties in meeting their basic needs. The relative share of the poor compared to the district's poverty line increased in 2012 to 19.3% but remained lower than the country average. The income inequality slightly increased as well and the ratio between the incomes of the richest and the poorest 20% of households was 6.8 times in 2012.

👤 Labour Market ● ● ● ●

The economic activity in Burgas District recovered from 2011 to 2013 and preserved levels higher than the country average – the economic activity rate of the population 15+ was 54.7% in 2014. The employment rate rose to reach 48.6% in 2014, nearing the record pre-crisis levels (49.1% in 2008). A drop in the unemployment rate which shrank to 11% and remained below Bulgaria's average was noted in 2014.

The demographic replacement rate was about 66% in 2014: there were 66 people aged 15–19 joining the workforce per 100 people aged 60–64, leaving it.

🏭 Investment ● ● ● ● ●

As at the end of 2013, Burgas District ranked second, following the capital city, in terms of accrued foreign direct investments. The number of non-financial companies increased in 2012 and 2013. Expenditure on the acquisition of FTAs also considerably increased in the district and they reached 1.9 billion BGN in 2013.

The municipalities of Burgas District feature a very good drawdown of EU funds. The total of sums paid under contracts with municipalities as beneficiaries under operational programmes were 477 m BGN as of January 2015. The district centre of Burgas drew down funds extremely well (254 m BGN), just like the municipalities of Sozopol (46 m BGN), Primorsko (17 m BGN), Nesebar (52 m BGN), Pomorie (39 m BGN), Malko Tarnovo (5 m BGN) and Ruen (29 m BGN).

🚌 Infrastructure ● ●

The road network density in Burgas District is not very high, but the Trakia highway, completed in 2013, has increased the district's potential. The quality of the highway is very good though generally road condition in the district poses a challenge: barely 35% of the roads were in good condition at the end of 2014. The railway network density is low, and railway transport serves the lines to the inland parts of Bulgaria, not to the seaside holiday villages. In 2014, a little over half of the households had access to the Internet though Internet use remained low: 48.6% of people aged 16–74 used the Internet for the past 12 months.

% Taxes and Fees ●

In 2015, the taxes on non-residential properties of companies were relatively low in the municipalities of Nesebar (1.2‰), Karnobat (1.4‰), Burgas (1.45‰), Aytos (1.5‰) and Sozopol (1,5‰). Most of the municipalities in the district, including Nesebar, Pomorie and Sozopol impose a 3.0% tax on the sale of property, which is high compared to the country data. This rate is 2.5% in the district centre of Burgas. Vehicle taxes are high. Annual licence taxes for retailers are also comparatively high, which is triggered by the large number of holiday villages in the district.

Waste charges for legal entities are rather low in the municipalities of Pomorie (4,0‰), Tsarevo (4,0‰), Nesebar (5,4‰) and Primorsko (5.5‰), and high in Aytos (12,0‰), Sredets (12‰) and Sozopol (10,0‰). The waste collection charge is 7.9‰ in the district centre of Burgas.

💼 Administration ● ● ●

Several municipalities in Burgas District have performed relatively well in services rendered by electronic means and serving at one-stop counter (as per 2015 data). The services rendered by electronic means are developed in the municipalities of Burgas, Ruen and Sozopol. The one-stop counter is well organised in the municipalities of Aytos, Burgas, Kameno, Karnobat and Ruen. In 2014, the cadastral map covered 16.3% of the district's territory – the municipalities of Burgas, Malko Tarnovo, Nesebar, Primorsko and Tsarevo are better covered by it.

The municipalities in Burgas District improved their 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. The best performing municipalities in terms of this rating are Burgas, Karnobat, Primorsko and Sozopol.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The population of Burgas District was 414,335 people in 2014, which ranks it fourth in Bulgaria. About three quarters of the district's residents live in towns and cities. The population of Burgas District has retained unchanged levels for the past two years (2013–2014) which was determined by the steady rate of natural decrease (–3,2‰ in 2014) and by the steady positive net migration rate (2.5‰ in 2014 г.).

Age dependency ratios have followed the negative nationwide trends, but have been more favourable than elsewhere. In 2014 the population aged 65+ was 1.2 times more than the number of children (aged up to 14) and reached about 25% of the working population (15–64). The birthrate was 10.2‰ in 2014, one of the highest in Bulgaria.

Education

The number of students in Burgas District slightly increased in recent years (2012–2014) and the number of teachers remained relatively low: 15.2 students per teacher were reported in 2014. The net enrolment rate in classes V–VIII dropped to 78.5% (2014). Despite being relatively good in comparison with the country average, the indicators regarding dropouts and repeaters deteriorated: the share of dropouts from primary and secondary schools increased to 2,0% (2013), and the share of repeaters increased to 1.1% in 2014. The average grade at state matriculation exams was 4.22 in 2015 and the percentage of failed students was 7.1%.

There were about 9,000 university students in Burgas in 2014, and the institutions of higher education constitute a factor for attracting the young to the district centre. However, the share of graduates in the workforce remains low: in 2014, 18.8% of the population aged 25–64 were graduates.

Healthcare

The number of hospital beds in Burgas District has not changed drastically for the past three years (1,233 beds in 2014). In 2014, inpatients in MpHATs decreased substantially to 102.4 per 1,000 people, which demonstrated the second lowest morbidity rate in Bulgaria. An insufficient number of health professionals has been observed, and the district has considerably lagged behind in the number of general practitioners per capita.

The share of health-insured persons steadily decreased in Burgas District from 2010 to 2013, reaching 83.8% in 2014, a relatively low level of health insurance coverage which could pose an obstacle in healthcare access for a considerable part of the residing people in the district. The infant mortality rate slightly increased in 2014 reaching 8.1‰.

Security and Justice

Burgas District remains one of the most insecure districts in Bulgaria, though the number of crimes against the property has decreased for the past year. 7.4 crimes against individuals and 117.2 crimes against property per 10,000 people were registered in 2014. In comparison, similar levels of the latter type of crimes have been observed only in the capital city and Varna District. Simultaneously, it could be concluded from the data that courts work relatively efficiently and quickly. In 2013 the share of criminal cases, tried by the District Court and closed in the first 3 months, was 90%, and the share of pending criminal cases was 7.3% at the end of 2013, the country average being 8.5%. The judges' workload decreased in recent years in Burgas District, reaching 7.7 cases per judge per month compared to 8.3 cases per judge per month in 2013.

Environment

Burgas District is not on the list of districts with the highest concentration of harmful emissions; carbon dioxide emissions were about 90 t/sq. km in 2013. Household waste collected per capita of serviced population increased in 2013 and remained above the average country levels – approximately 519 kg per individual from the serviced population.

Slightly over 75% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems in 2013, and 61.2% of it had access to sewage connected with waste water treatment plants. Investments in this regard increased in recent years, but the capacity of some of the operating plants is still insufficient in summer. Expenditure on environmental protection increased considerably in the district to reach 320 m BGN in 2013.

Culture

The indicators regarding cultural activities in Burgas District have developed relatively well in recent years. Visits to the theatres increased and reached 150,000 in 2014. Visits to the cinema increased several times following the opening of a big shopping centre and a modern cinema in 2012, reaching almost 384,000 in 2014. Visits to the museums slightly shrank to 203,000. Library visits steadily decreased in 2014 reaching 59,000, which is very low in comparison with the country.

Key Indicators for the District of Burgas

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,426	8,426	9,282	9,375	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,722	3,722	3,374	3,823	4,234	4,182
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,830	6,830	7,359	6,271	8,212	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	21.3	19.0	17.6	19.3	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	50.3	50.3	51.9	59.3	54.8	54.7
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	48.3	48.3	45.4	53.1	47.8	48.6
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	3.9	3.9	12.6	10.4	12.7	11.0
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	63	63	62	53	67	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	3,032	3,032	2,379	1,105	4,553	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,985	1,985	4,361	957	5,885	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	31.5	31.5	47.3	54.9	44.8	51.6
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	22.1	55.0	27.1	35.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	16.2	16.2	16.2	11.3	16.3	16.3

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−0.6	−2.5	−3.0	−3.3	−3.0	−3.2
Net migration rate (‰)	4.1	0.0	0.7	−0.2	3.7	2.5
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	14.4	15.6	17.3	18.6	20.2	18.8
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.3
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	5.4	5.8	3.9	6.6	7.0	6.1
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.0	85.6	85.6	84.6	83.2	83.8
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	109.8	97.6	93.4	140.8	166.1	102.4
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	151.1	161.3	144.0	131.8	140.0	117.2
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.0	5.4	9.3	8.4	7.3	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	444.5	344.6	413.1	424.3	771.5	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	58.4	58.7	60.6	60.7	61.2	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	35.6	63.1	100.8	551.7	844.8	927.1
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	188.3	172.1	289.2	281.5	317.4	361.2

Dobrich District

▶ Population (2014)	183,744
▶ Area (sq. km)	4,719.7
▶ Number of settlements	215
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.1
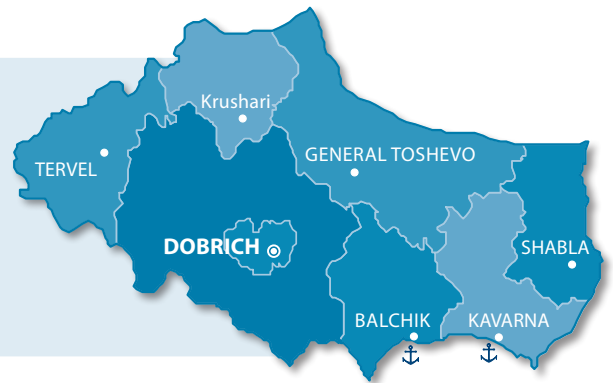
Overview

The indicators regarding the GDP, incomes and salaries in Dobrich District are lower than the country average. Nonetheless, a relatively smaller part of the population lives in poverty and material deprivation. Dobrich features a relatively high economic activity of the population, which is due to both the higher employment rate and the higher unemployment in the district compared to the country average. The district has failed in attracting sufficient foreign investments. Conducting business in the district has been hampered by the relatively high local taxes and fees, offset in part by the better development of the local government's e-services and the better transparency of the local administration.

Demographic data give grounds to prognosticate that the district's population will start to age faster. The extraordinarily high share of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary schools poses an obvious problem. The healthcare indicators demonstrate that the district's citizens are either unable or unwilling to get healthcare services on the territory of the district. The registered crimes have increased in the past few years while the district's courts are among the least busy in Bulgaria.

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
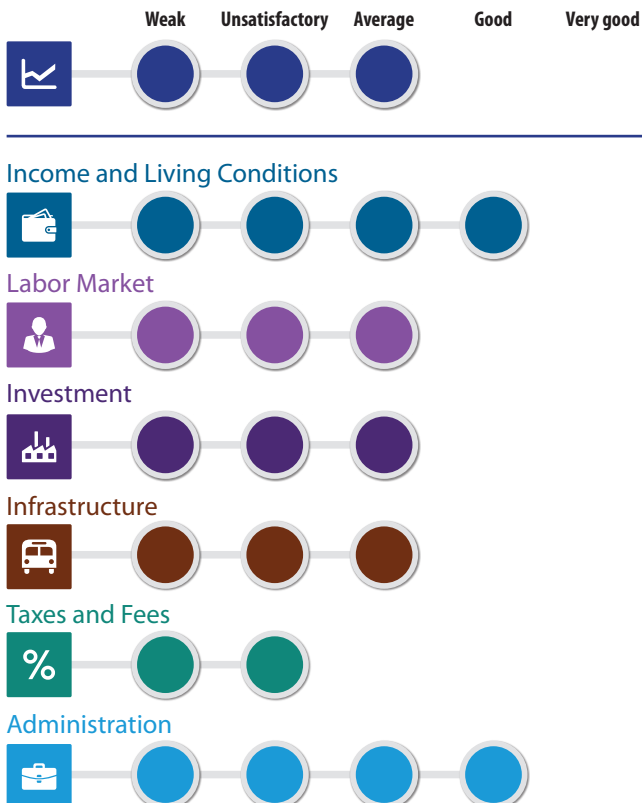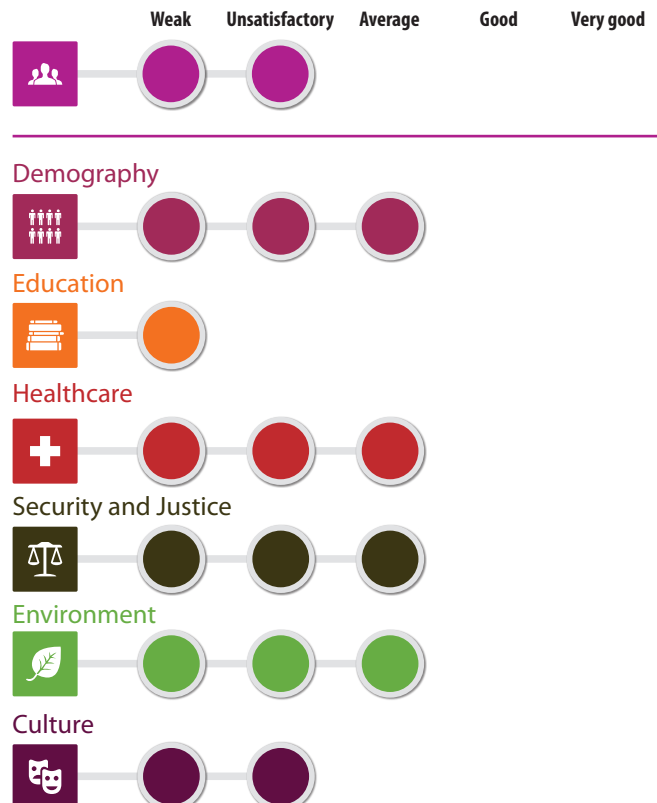
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

The district's economy had slumped since the beginning of the crisis in 2009, but quickly recovered exceeding its pre-crisis levels in GDP per capita as early as 2010. Nevertheless, incomes have remained below the country average. The annual income per household member reached 4,091 BGN in 2014, which was 15% less than the national figure. The annual average gross salary of the employed was 7,164 BGN in 2013 or lower than the country average by 23%.

Notwithstanding the lower incomes, poverty in Dobrich District is lower than in the rest of the districts. 31% of the district's population lived in material deprivation in 2012, the country average being 43%, and 9% lived in households with low work intensity compared to 12% for Bulgaria.

Labour Market ●●●

The population's economic activity has distinctly increased in the last four years and is above the country's average levels. The economic activity rate in the district reached 56.8% in 2014 compared to 54.1% for Bulgaria, which ranked Dobrich among the top five districts in economic activity.

The higher unemployment rate determined the higher economic activity of the population in Dobrich (14.3% in 2014 compared to a country average of 11.4%) with an employment rate roughly the same as the national level – 48.6%.

There were 60 youngsters aged 15–19 per 100 people aged 60–64 in 2014. This ratio implies a less favourable demographic replacement rate than the country average and future workforce shortages.

Investment ●●●

Although the number of enterprises and domestic investments, relative to the population in Dobrich District, has neared the country average figures, in 2013 the district failed to attract sufficient foreign investments. The accrued FDIs in non-financial companies were 300 m euros in the district as at the end of 2013. Relative to the population, this figure equalled 1,632.4 euros per capita, which was two times lower than the country average of 3,230.9 euros per capita.

As of 31 January 2015, the municipalities in the district received more than 85 m BGN or 463.0 BGN per capita as beneficiaries under the operational programmes, compared to 564.9 BGN per capita for the country. No big discrepancies between the eight municipalities are noted in Dobrich District in the utilisation of EU funds. Totals vary from 711.5 BGN per capita in Kavarna Munici-

pality and 709.5 BGN per capita in Balchik Municipality to 126.3 BGN per capita in General Toshevo and 119.3 BGN per capita in Krushari Municipality.

Infrastructure ●●●

In view of the district's peripheral geographic location, the railway network density is almost three times lower than that in the rest of the country. The road network density has neared the national figure but has remained below it. Road quality aggravated for the third successive year in 2014, and the share of roads in good condition reached 39.9%, which means that for the first time in five years the share of roads in good condition has become negligibly lower than the country average of 40.5%.

The number of households with Internet access is lower than the rest of the districts (49.6% compared to 56.7%), but the share of people, who have used the Internet for the past 12 months, equals the country average.

Taxes and Fees ●●

Municipal taxes and fees in Dobrich District considerably deviate from the country average. The annual license tax for retailers is almost 50% less than its national average in 2015. The taxes on properties of legal entities and the waste collection charges are lower than the country average, while the vehicle tax and the taxes on the sale of immovable property are higher by about 10–20%.

Administration ●●●●

Dobrich was among the four districts with a larger share of the territory covered by the cadastral map in 2014 – 32.1% compared to the national average of 18.1%. Administrative one-stop shop services have traditionally been better developed compared to the other districts, and the level of local government e-services is similar to the average level of development in the country in 2015.

In 2015 the Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies in Dobrich District is higher than the country average. The district got 58.6 points in 2015 compared to the country's average of 54.4, out of Bulgaria's maximum of 88.4 points. The figure for local government bodies' transparency is the highest in Dobrich Municipality (73.0 points), which constitutes the third best result (following the municipalities of Strazhitsa and Sofia), out of 265 municipalities in Bulgaria. The municipalities of Krushari and Tervel have slightly lower results – 70.7 points, 68.3 points respectively, and Shabla Municipality has the poorest result of 24.0 points.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ●

Demography ● ● ●

The rate of natural increase was more favourable in Dobrich District than that nationwide till 2008, but it has rapidly aggravated since then. The rate of natural decrease was –7.4‰ in the district in 2014 compared to Bulgaria's average of –5.7‰. Combined with the negative migration trends, this implies faster population ageing in the future, though the age dependency ratios are currently fluctuating about the country average. The relative share of urban population was 69.1% in 2014 compared to the country average of 73.1%. Population density is lowest in Dobrich District relative to the territory of settlements, and the district average was two times lower than that nationwide in 2014.

Education ●

Although data from state matriculation exams demonstrate that students in Dobrich District have performed relatively well, the district's rating is very poor due to the big share of repeaters and dropouts. Dobrich retained its first place with the biggest share of repeaters in 2014 as well – 2.4% compared to the national average of 1.4%. Moreover, the district ranked third (following Sliven and Targovishte) with the highest number of dropouts from primary and secondary schools – 4.0% compared to 2.4% for Bulgaria. The educational system has also failed in the enforcement of compulsory education – the net enrolment rate of the population (grades 5th through 8th) was the fourth lowest in Bulgaria (76.4%) in 2014.

There were 890 college students in 2014 in Dobrich District, or 5 students in institutions of higher education per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 38 per 1,000 people. The share of graduates in the population also lagged behind: 18.4% in 2014 compared to the national average of 27%.

Healthcare ● ● ●

The number of general practitioners in Dobrich District, relative to the population, has been traditionally higher than Bulgaria's average. However, the district lacked key health professionals in 2014, despite the improvement observed in recent years. Dobrich still has a relatively small number of beds in MpHATs, ranking second to the district of Pernik in 2014 for the smallest number of beds per 1,000 people. Simultaneously, the district has ranked third (after Burgas and Pernik) in terms of the smallest number of inpatients. It can be assumed that these two indicators are interrelated, the reason being the frequent use of healthcare outside the district, probably in Varna, just like Pernik residents seek healthcare in the capital city.

Security and Justice ● ● ●

Generally, the number of registered crimes against the person has been lower in Dobrich District for the past 15 years than nationwide, relative to the population, but their number went sharply up in 2013 and 2014 to exceed the country average. The dynamics of registered crimes against the property has been similar; the traditionally low crime rate in recent years was followed by a surge in crimes to 89.9 per 10,000 people in 2014, which exceeded the country average.

Despite the growth of the crime rate in 2013, the workload of penal judges in the District Court continued to drop. There were 6 cases per month per judge in 2013 (compared to more than 7 cases three years earlier), while there were 8.3 cases per month per judge in Bulgaria on average. The performance of Dobrich District in this category was also positively influenced by both the relatively high share of criminal cases completed within 3 months (91.0% compared to the country average of 88.4%) and the relatively low share of pending criminal cases (7.2% compared to 8.5% for Bulgaria) in 2013.

Environment ● ● ●

Dobrich District was one of the four districts (following Varna, Pernik and Sofia City) featuring the highest share of the population having access to sewage connected to waste water treatment plants, in 2013 – 70.8% compared to the country's average of 56.4%. Dobrich was also one of the districts emitting the smallest volumes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere in 2013 – 5.2 tonnes of harmful emissions per sq. km compared to the country average of 293.9 t/sq. km. The district ranked fifth in lowest expenditure on environmental protection in 2013 – 114.4 BGN per capita or two and a half times lower than Bulgaria's average of 288.9 BGN per capita.

Culture ● ●

The performance of Dobrich District concerning cultural life indicators has been controversial. On the one hand, there are several times fewer recorded visits to the cinema than the country average in 2014 – 125.2 per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 706 per 1,000 people. Figures for visits to theatres and libraries are also considerably lower than the country average. On the other hand, relative to the population, there have traditionally been many more visits to museums than the country average figures –1,075 per 1,000 people in 2014 compared to 662 per 1,000, which probably was due to the intensive inflow of tourists into the district.

Key Indicators for the District of Dobrich

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,650	6,609	7,058	7,285	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,974	3,013	2,994	3,856	4,166	4,091
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,772	6,130	6,394	6,738	7,164	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	21.4	19.6	23.4	20.2	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	52.5	52.5	52.9	54.9	56.1	56.8
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	45.7	43.9	43.7	46.4	47.3	48.6
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	12.9	16.4	17.3	15.4	15.8	14.3
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	47	47	48	48	51	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	4,592	1,941	1,975	1,756	2,052	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	971	1,520	1,236	1,398	1,632	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	20.0	24.1	36.2	49.7	54.1	49.6
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	47.9	45.2	46.0	45.8	39.3
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−4.6	−5.9	−5.7	−6.8	−6.7	−7.4
Net migration rate (‰)	−4.4	−5.6	−3.7	−2.5	−2.8	−2.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	16.7	17.9	18.4	18.3	18.4	18.4
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.2	4.3	4.3
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	6.4	3.9	2.6	3.2	4.1	2.9
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.6	83.9	86.6	85.4	84.0	84.6
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	138.0	127.4	131.5	136.5	134.1	134.5
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	88.0	96.0	85.7	81.7	88.2	89.9
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	5.6	6.3	7.4	7.3	7.2	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	63.5	57.5	64.4	100.4	114.4	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	67.4	67.7	69.4	70.7	70.8	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	41.3	58.0	64.7	24.4	28.3	125.2
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	88.0	76.6	214.2	205.0	244.8	261.0

Gabrovo District

▶ Population (2014)	117,311
▶ Area (sq. km)	2,023.0
▶ Number of settlements	356
▶ Share of urban population (%)	82.0

SEVLIEVO
DRYANOVO
GABROVO
TRYAVNA

Overview

Gabrovo District features an intensive industrial profile and traditionally good economic indicators. Incomes have remained relatively high, and the unemployment rate has been among the lowest in Bulgaria. Considerable FDIs have accrued in the district throughout the years, and its municipalities have utilised EU funds very well. Local taxes and fees are among the lowest ones in Bulgaria.

The badly deteriorated demography poses a big challenge before Gabrovo District. The district features very high age dependency ratios and one of the low-

est birth rates in Bulgaria. The indicators for scope and quality of school education deteriorated in 2014. However, the number of graduates relative to the workforce increased, which constitutes a key factor for the development of the district. The good rate of utilisation and investment of EU funds has entailed very good indicators for the environment, especially with respect to water management. The indicators concerning the development of cultural activities in Gabrovo District have also been good compared to the national average levels.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
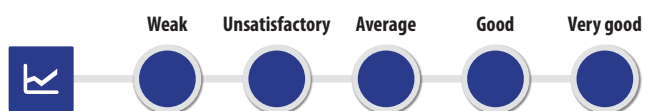
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	●

Income and Living Conditions
● ● ● ●

Labor Market
● ● ●

Investment
● ● ● ●

Infrastructure
● ● ● ● ●

Taxes and Fees
● ● ● ● ●

Administration
● ● ● ●

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	
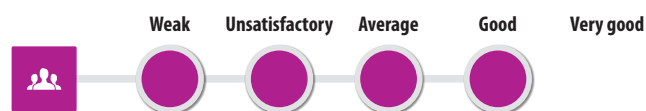
Demography
●

Education
● ● ●

Healthcare
● ● ● ● ●

Security and Justice
● ● ● ●

Environment
● ● ●

Culture
● ● ● ● ●

⬚ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

⬚ Income and Lliving Conditions ●●●●

Gabrovo District's economy is the seventh biggest in Bulgaria, and the GDP per capita reached 9,025 BGN in 2012. The district's economy recovered very well from 2011 to 2012 compared to the national general trend. Incomes have remained relatively high in the district, and pension incomes stand out as relatively higher. Salaries have surged for the past couple of years, and the annual gross salary per employed person reached 7,912 BGN in 2013.

45.8% of the district's population lived in material deprivation in 2012, i.e. they faced difficulties in meeting their basic needs. The relative share of the poor compared to the district's poverty line fell to 15.2%, and this is a low level in comparison with the country. The share of people living in households with low employment, also dropped – barely 4.5% in 2012.

⬚ Labour Market ●●●

The labour market's recovery from 2012–2013 regarding Gabrovo District slowed down in 2014 – the employment rate remained 48.1%, and the economic activity fell to 52.3%. The unemployment rate continued to fall and was among the lowest in Bulgaria. It was 8.1% in 2014. Only the capital city has sustained lower levels of unemployment. The demographic replacement rate deteriorated a lot, though it increased slightly in 2014 to 47%, which means that there were 47 people aged 15–19 about to join the workforce per 100 people aged 60–64, about to leave it.

⬚ Investment ●●●●

Gabrovo is among the districts featuring the biggest amount of attracted FDIs, weighed against the population. However, in the past couple of years (2012–2013) there has been no inflow of foreign capitals. The expenditure on the acquisition of FTAs recovered in 2013 and reached almost 183 m BGN.

The municipalities of Gabrovo District have utilised EU funds very well, and the district has topped the rank in terms of EU funds paid relative to the population. The funds municipalities received as beneficiaries under EU operational programmes as of January 2015, were approximately 160 m BGN. The district centre of Gabrovo has drawn down funds exceptionally well (124 m BGN), followed by the municipalities of Sevlievo (22 m BGN) and Tryavna (10.5 m BGN).

⬚ Infrastructure ●●●●●

Gabrovo remains the district with the densest road network in Bulgaria – about 25 km per 100 sq. km of territory (2013). No highway, however, passes through the district. Gabrovo has remained one of few district centres without a bypass. The quality of roads has improved in recent years, and the share of roads in good condition reached 41.5% in 2014, higher than the country average.

Households' access to the Internet was enhanced, and the district has already ranked among the top ones in Bulgaria – 64.4% of households had access to the Internet in 2014. Internet use also went up in 2014 and 63.2% of the people aged 16–74 have used the Internet for the past 12 months.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●●

Local taxes and fees in the municipalities of Gabrovo District have been among the lowest in Bulgaria and remain unchanged in 2015. The tax on properties of legal entities is 1.5‰ in the municipalities of Dryanovo, Gabrovo and Sevlievo, and 2.0‰ in Tryavna Municipality. The tax on the sale of immovable property is 2.0% in the municipalities of Dryanovo, Gabrovo and Tryavna, and 2.5% in Sevlievo Municipality. The vehicle tax is also low in the district centre of Gabrovo.

Household waste charges imposed in the four municipalities of the district are among the lowest in Bulgaria: Gabrovo – 3,10‰, Dryanovo – 6,70‰, Sevlievo – 3,80‰ and Tryavna – 4,75‰. Gabrovo Municipality is practically among the districts with the lowest taxes and fees in Bulgaria.

⬚ Administration ●●●●

The municipalities of Gabrovo District have performed relatively well in the provision of e-services and one-stop' shop services. The municipalities of Dryanovo and Gabrovo are positive examples in the rendering of e-services. One-stop shop services are well organised in the municipalities of Dryanovo, Gabrovo and Tryavna. The cadastral map covered 21.3% of the district's territory in 2014, which was high compared to the national average.

Gabrovo District has also performed very well in the 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. The municipality of Gabrovo received the highest transparency rating within the district, and the municipality of Dryanovo – the lowest. However, all of the municipalities in the district have considerably improved their grade compared to one year earlier.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Demography ●

Gabrovo District is one of the smallest districts in Bulgaria. The population continued to decrease in 2014 and has already dropped to about 117,000 people. The relative share of urban population is over 80%. The high rate of natural decrease caused the drastic drop in the number of residents; this decrease has been about –10‰ in recent years (2012–2014). The outflow from the district also accelerated, and the net migration rate was –4,8‰ in 2014.

The age dependency ratios have deteriorated, and Gabrovo District (alongside Vidin District) has faced the most serious challenges in Bulgaria. In 2014 the population aged 65+ was almost 2.4 times larger than that of children (aged up to 14) and about 43% of the working population (aged 15–64). The birthrate was the second lowest in Bulgaria after that of Smolyan District (6.6‰ in 2014).

Education ●●●

The number of teachers, relative to the number of students in Gabrovo District, has been preserved in recent years – there were 14 students per teacher in 2014. The net enrolment rate of the population (grades 5th through 8th) slightly decreased and it was already 77.6% in 2014. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary schools was 2.2% (in 2013), and the relative share of repeaters was 1.1% (2014). The grades at state matriculation exams were slightly lower in 2015 – 4.23 on average for the district. The relative share of failures, i.e. grades below average 3.00 increased to 6.6% in 2015.

The Technical University of Gabrovo is located in the district centre. It has good traditions and it has been one of the factors for attracting young people to the district. The number of students has continued to increase surpassing 6,000 people in 2014. The relative share of graduates aged 25–64 increased to 26.3% in 2014.

Healthcare ●●●●●

The number of beds in MpHATs in Gabrovo District has slightly increased for the past year which shows that the local population has been provided with beds relatively well – 614 beds in 2014 or 5.2 beds per 1,000 people. The cases of hospitalisation in MpHATs were 246.2 per 1,000 people, above the country average; this could be related to the ageing of the local population and the increased morbidity rate.

Health-insured persons residing in the district were about 94% in 2014, which demonstrated good access to healthcare in comparison with the country. The district features a higher number of health professionals com-pared to Bulgaria, though the number of cardiologists is relatively small. The infant mortality rate fell to 1.3‰ in 2014, the lowest level in the entire country.

Security and Justice ●●●●

According to official data, Gabrovo District is relatively secure. 4.2 crimes against the person per 10,000 people were registered in 2014 and 83 crimes against the property, the latter having considerably dropped in recent years. It can be concluded from the data that the court works relatively efficiently and quickly. In 2013 the share of criminal cases, decided by the District Court and closed in the first 3 months, was 96%, and the share of pending criminal cases was 7.6% as at the end of 2013, with the country average at 8.5%. Judge workload was relatively low in Gabrovo District in 2013, reaching 7.6 cases per judge per month compared to the national average of 8.3 cases per judge per month.

Environment ●●●●

Notwithstanding the industrial profile of Gabrovo District, carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere have remained low in comparison to Bulgaria – 31 t/sq. km in 2013. Collected household waste increased in 2013 to 424 kg per capita.

The share of the population having access to public sewerage was 85% in 2013, which is very high. 67% of the population with access to sewage has been connected to waste water treatment plants since 2010. This is one of the top levels in Bulgaria according to 2013 data; the reason is the high proportion of urban population and the good utilisation of EU funds intended for this purpose. The construction of Gabrovo's water cycle project continued in 2015. The expenditure on environmental protection surged in the district in 2013 and has already reached 17.5 m BGN.

Culture ●●●●●

The indicators regarding cultural activities in Gabrovo District have developed relatively well in recent years. Visits to museums have traditionally been very high – 296,000 in 2014. Visits to theatres attendances surged to 47,000 in 2014, which exceeded the national figure relative to the local population. Visits to the cinema declined to 17,000 in 2014, but it could be expected that their number will rise following the opening of a new cinema in 2015 in the district centre of Gabrovo. Library visits gradually fell to 54,000 in 2014.

Key Indicators for the District of Gabrovo

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,614	7,296	8,721	9,025	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,587	3,113	3,351	4,408	4,858	4,787
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,112	6,591	6,827	7,399	7,912	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	15.9	17.1	17.6	15.2	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	49.7	48.3	48.9	50.0	52.7	52.3
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	47.6	44.7	44.1	45.2	48.1	48.1
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	4.4	7.5	9.9	9.6	8.8	8.1
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	48	48	48	48	48	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,183	830	1,345	1,181	1,534	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,613	1,747	2,224	2,245	2,172	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	22.9	33.5	39.8	34.8	48.2	64.4
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	24.6	31.4	32.0	36.4	41.5
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	20.4	21.2	21.2	21.2	21.2	21.3

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−7.9	−9.3	−9.7	−11.2	−10.7	−11.6
Net migration rate (‰)	−6.8	−8.3	−2.2	−0.9	−3.6	−4.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	27.8	24.2	25.0	25.1	24.9	26.3
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.3	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.4
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	4.8	5.3	4.2	4.7	3.7	4.3
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	92.7	91.1	94.2	93.5	92.7	94.0
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	217.7	195.4	201.2	239.3	261.5	246.2
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	112.3	120.0	108.3	87.7	93.6	83.0
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	5.5	4.7	8.4	6.6	7.6	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	24.9	32.2	31.3	42.3	147.0	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	46.4	65.0	66.6	66.7	66.8	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	105.9	97.1	103.4	68.9	153.8	144.9
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	206.7	299.4	293.4	293.5	321.9	398.9

Haskovo District

▶ Population (2014)	238,488
▶ Area (sq. km)	5,533.3
▶ Number of settlements	261
▶ Share of urban population (%)	72.5

Overview

The recovery of Haskovo District's economy has progressed awkwardly following the crisis and incomes have remained low compared to the national average. Both economic activity and employment have increased for the past two years and a drop was reported regarding unemployment. Investments have remained very low, and there was even an outflow of foreign capitals in 2012 and 2013. Nonetheless, the utilisation of EU funds intensified in 2014. E-services and one-stop services at local municipalities improved.

The demographic issues of Haskovo District have been caused by the negative natural increase of the population. In school education, students from the district have traditionally performed more poorly compared to the country average and the low share of people with university degrees has remained an issue. Haskovo District is relatively safe in comparison with the country, and judicature is relatively fast. The indicators regarding culture have demonstrated a low intensity of cultural activities.

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	●				
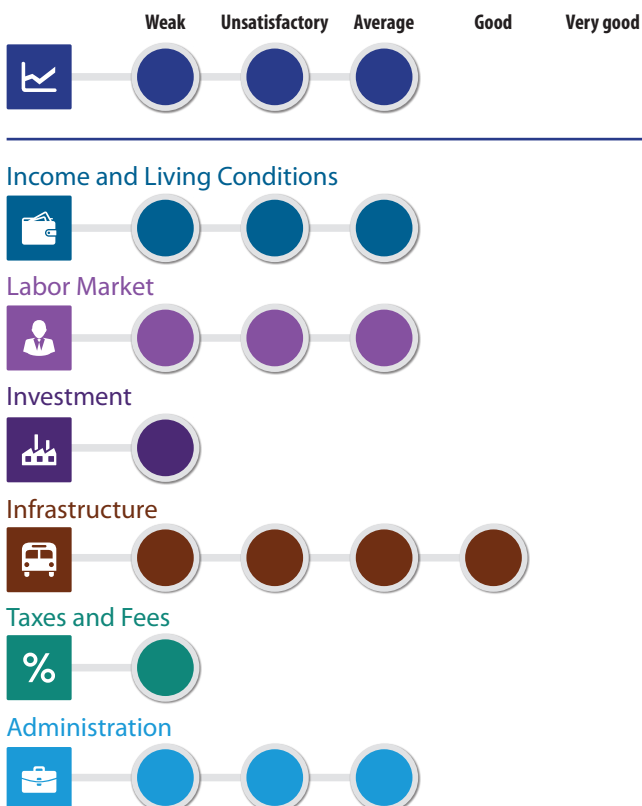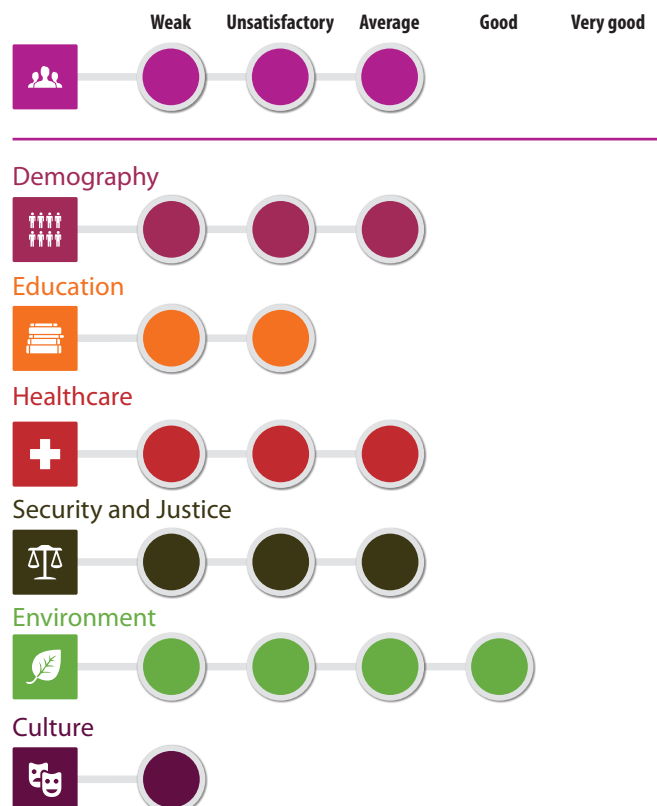
⬕ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

💼 Income and Living Conditions ●●●

The economy of Haskovo District remains among the poorer ones in Bulgaria. GDP per capita was 6,166 BGN in 2012, compared to the country average of almost 11,000 BGN. Incomes have recovered slowly in recent years, with high incomes from self-employment and pensions standing out. The average annual gross salary was among the lowest in the country in 2014 at 6,581 BGN.

The relative share of the population living below the district's poverty line has dropped, constituting 15.5% in 2012 – a share much lower than the country average. The drop of the median income was the main reason for that in 2012, which automatically means a lower poverty line for the district. The share of people living in material deprivation diminished as well to slightly over 40% in 2012. The income inequality increased and the ratio of the incomes of the richest to those of the poorest 20% of households reached 6 times in 2012.

👤 Labour Market ●●●

The recovery of the labour market has intensified for the past two years and employment of the population aged 15+ reached 47.5% in 2014. Economic activity has increased and was already 53% in 2014. Unemployment has plummeted to 10.4% in 2014, below the country average. The demographic replacement rate aggravated to 60% in 2014: there were 60 people aged 15–19, who were to join the workforce, per 100 people aged 60–64, who were to leave it.

🏭 Investment ●

FDIs in Haskovo District are among the lowest in Bulgaria, and an outflow of foreign capitals was observed in the last reported years (2012–2013). Expenditure on acquiring FTAs was also at very low levels, barely 209 m BGN in 2013.

The municipalities in the district have utilised EU funds more intensively and the funds they were paid reached almost 115 m BGN as of 31 January 2015. The municipalities of Svilengrad and Madzharovo represent the best examples of drawing down EU funds in the district – 45 m BGN and 1.5 m BGN respectively. The district centre of Haskovo received 36 m BGN of these funds. The municipalities of Simeonovgrad and Topolovgrad are the worst examples, with utilised funds of less than 0.5 m BGN.

🚋 Infrastructure ●●●●

Haskovo District's road network density is slightly better than the average level for Bulgaria. A positive factor is the proximity of the completed Trakia highway, and the progress in the construction of the Maritsa highway is very important for the settlements in the district. The quality of roads (excluding highways) has deteriorated in recent years and barely 30% of roads in Haskovo District were in good condition in 2014.

Households' connectivity to the Internet has improved in Haskovo District – 57.5% of them already had Internet access in 2014. The use of the Internet has considerably increased and 62% of the population stated they had used the Internet in the past 12 months.

% Taxes and Fees ●

Local taxes and fees are relatively high in Haskovo District in comparison with the country average, which is valid for the immovable property taxes and vehicle taxes, and also for the taxes on the sale of property and the annual waste collection charges. The local taxes in the district centre of Haskovo are among the highest compared to other district centres – 2‰ for immovable properties of companies, 2.6% local tax on the sale of immovable property and relatively high vehicle taxes. The other municipalities featuring high taxes are Madzharovo and Stambolovo. Relatively low local taxes in the district are imposed in Lyubimets Municipality (1‰ on the immovable property of companies). The annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities is 12‰ in the district centre of Haskovo.

💼 Administration ●●●

The municipalities in Haskovo District strongly improved their administrative services in 2014. The municipalities of Dimitrovgrad, Haskovo and Ivaylovgrad provided good e-services. The municipalities of Dimitrovgrad, Haskovo, Lyubimets and Madzharovo are relatively well-prepared for providing one-stop shop services. The coverage of cadastral maps is close to that of the worst-performing districts; it includes barely 3.8% of the district's territory, partly including the municipalities of Haskovo, Dimitrovgrad, Harmanli and Ivaylovgrad.

Haskovo District has lagged behind concerning the Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. In terms of this indicator, the municipalities of Lyubimets, Haskovo, Simeonovgrad, Svilengrad and Harmanli have performed best, and the municipalities of Ivaylovgrad, Mineralni Bani and Madzharovo have performed worst.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ● ●

Demography ● ● ●

With regard to the population size, Haskovo ranks 11th in Bulgaria. Slightly more than 238,000 people lived in the district as at the end of 2014; 72.5% of them lived in towns and cities. A steady trend of decrease in the population size has been observed throughout the years, which had been caused by the high negative natural increase that reached –8‰ in 2014. The net migration rate of the population went up after the high net population outflow during the crisis years (2009–2011) and it was even positive in 2014.

The age dependency ratios have deteriorated in comparison with the country average and the population 65+ was about 1.5 times higher than the population 0–14 in 2014, and about one third of the working population aged 15–64.

Education ● ●

Haskovo District has faced a certain deficiency in the number of teachers in primary and secondary education – there were 14.5 students per teacher in 2014. The net enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th), despite the higher percentage of children attending school compared to the country average, fell to 80.5% in 2014, and the relative share of dropouts retained its level of 2.5% from 2011 to 2013. Grades at the state matriculation exam remained steady (4.1 in 2015), but the share of failed students soared – 9.2% of the students failed at the state matriculation exam.

The share of the population aged 25–64 with university degrees was 19.2% in 2014, which was low compared to the country average. No university has a registered address in the district and the number of students was barely 289 in 2014.

Healthcare ● ● ●

The number of beds in multi-profile hospitals in Haskovo District has slightly increased in recent years though lagging behind the country average – 781 beds in 2014, or 3.3 beds per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 4.8 beds. This insufficient number could be one of the reasons for the traditionally small number of cases of hospitalisation in multi-profile hospitals within the district – 188 per 1,000 people of the population in 2014. The lack of health professionals is noticeable. Specialised healthcare is concentrated in Haskovo City.

The number of health-insured persons is about the country average, 87.3% of the population in 2014. The infant mortality rate surged in 2014 reaching 12.1‰, thus ranking the district second in infant mortality after Sliven District.

Security and Justice ● ● ●

Haskovo District has good indicators for the security of people and property. 4.9 crimes against the person and 67.5 against property per 10,000 people were registered in 2014. It could be concluded from the data that the court works relatively efficiently and quickly. The share of criminal cases tried by the District Court and closed in the first 3 months, was 92% in 2013 and the share of pending criminal cases was 7.2% as at the end of 2013, the country average being 8.5%. Judges' workload is relatively high and has gone up for the past couple of years – it reached 10.1 cases per judge per month in 2013 compared to a country average of 8.3 cases per judge per month.

Environment ● ● ● ●

Emissions of carbon dioxide have increased for the last reported year and Haskovo is among the districts with relatively high emissions, a bit over 200 t/sq. km in 2013. Collected household waste per capita has decreased in recent years and its volume was already below the national average level in 2013, almost 300 kg per capita, the second lowest in the country.

Over 70% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems in 2013. Almost half the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (46.9% in 2013) has been connected to waste water treatment plants since 2011 following the commissioning of the waste water treatment plant of the town of Dimitrovgrad at the end of 2010; the new waste water treatment plant of Haskovo City was commissioned in mid-2011 – it considerably diminished the pollution of the Maritsa River. The expenditure on environmental protection amounted to approximately 39 m BGN in the district in 2013.

Culture ●

The indicators referring to cultural activities in Haskovo District show a number of weaknesses. Visits to museums crept up in 2014 to slightly more than 32,000, but the average number of visits in proportion to the population was much lower than the country average. Only the number of visits to theatres neared the national average, being 53,000 in 2014. Visits to cinemas were barely 11,000 – there is practicaly no modern cinema in the district centre. Visits to libraries have also dropped – 75,000 in 2014, which was below the national average in proportion to the population.

Key Indicators for the District of Haskovo

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,378	5,059	5,974	6,166	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,400	3,634	3,708	3,855	4,130	4,157
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,443	5,638	5,999	6,267	6,581	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	20.3	18.2	19.0	15.5	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	53.2	52.8	50.2	49.7	52.4	53.0
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	48.7	45.8	42.2	42.4	44.9	47.5
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	8.5	13.2	15.9	14.9	14.3	10.4
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	46	46	46	46	47	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	834	666	784	1,612	867	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	278	262	420	388	311	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	24.4	26.4	41.3	47.5	54.2	57.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	51.5	42.0	44.0	33.6	30.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−5.4	−6.4	−6.6	−6.7	−6.8	−8.0
Net migration rate (‰)	−4.7	−6.6	−4.0	−2.8	−3.1	1.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	18.6	19.4	17.1	18.5	20.3	19.2
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.1
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	5.7	7.1	7.2	8.4	7.3	7.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.8	86.3	88.3	87.5	86.2	87.3
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	141.1	140.0	147.4	180.4	197.9	188.1
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	63.0	69.9	72.9	60.0	70.3	67.5
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	7.9	8.0	8.4	8.2	7.2	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	105.1	106.6	86.8	167.0	161.5	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	0.0	0.0	46.7	46.7	46.9	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	22.6	22.8	23.0	68.9	53.2	46.1
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	149.0	139.0	202.7	210.6	238.4	220.7

Kardzhali District

▶ Population (2014)	151,329
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,209.1
▶ Number of settlements	472
▶ Share of urban population (%)	41.4

Chernoochene

KARDZHALI

ARDINO

MOMCHILGRAD

DZHEBEL

KRUMOVGRAD

Kirkovo

Overview

Kardzhali District is relatively underdeveloped in economic terms, but its recovery from the crisis has been steady in recent years. The district's employment rate has soared, but incomes have remained among the lowest in Bulgaria. There have been no significant domestic or foreign investments in the district. Some municipalities have featured good utilisation of EU funds. Municipal taxes in Kardzhali District have been relatively low, but the development of administrative services has seriously lagged behind.

Kardzhali is among the smaller districts of Bulgaria. A predominantly rural population characterises the district. The age dependency ratios have deteriorated but are relatively better than the country average. Education is definitely faced with challenges – performance at state matriculation exams keeps getting worse and the number of college graduates in the workforce is insufficient. With regard to the number of crimes against the personality and property, Kardzhali is the second most secure district in Bulgaria. The indicators pertaining to the district's cultural life have demonstrated relatively limited cultural activities.

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
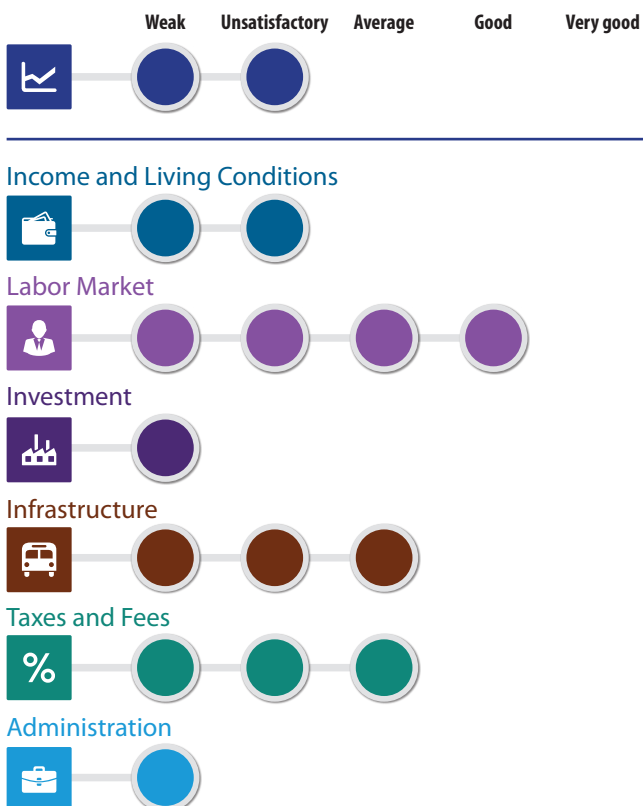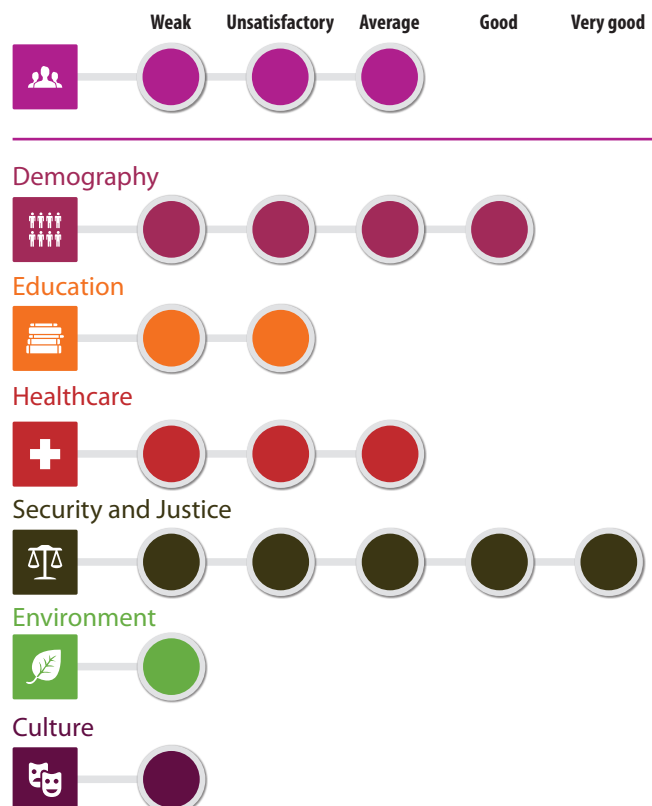
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●

The economy has steadily recovered in recent years and Kardzhali District is no longer among the five poorest districts of Bulgaria. GDP per capita was 6,139 BGN in 2012. Incomes have remained among the lowest in the country, with pension incomes standing out as the lowest. Nonetheless, salaries grew steadily at the rate of 16% in 2012 and 2013.

The share of the population living in material deprivation was almost 40% in 2012, but this indicator has greatly varied over the years. The levels of relative poverty have risen – 26% of the population was below the district's poverty line in 2012. The inequality in the allocation of incomes has also surged – the ratio of the incomes of the poorest to the incomes of the richest 20% of households is now seven times.

Labour Market ●●●●

The employment rate in Kardzhali District steadily recovered from 2011 to 2014. It reached 49% in 2014 , a figure above the average for the country, for the first time in ten years. The unemployment rate has slightly dropped for the past two years. The district's economic activity has risen though still counting as relatively low – the economic activity rate of the population 15+ was 51.5% in 2014.

The demographic replacement rate plummeted in recent years to almost 61% in 2014, which means that there were 61 youngsters aged 15–19 about to join the workforce, per 100 people aged 60–64 about to leave it.

Investment ●

FDI levels in Kardzhali District went up from 2010 to 2013 but were relatively low compared to Bulgaria. The district still had the smallest number of non-financial companies in Bulgaria weighed against the population in 2013. It has seriously lagged behind in expenditure on the acquisition of FTAs as well (106 m BGN in 2013). The municipalities in Kardzhali District have managed to utilise EU funds relatively well – they were paid more than 97 m BGN as beneficiaries under operational programmes as of 31 January 2015. A large portion of the utilised funds were concentrated in the regional centre of Kardzhali (66 m BGN) and also in the municipalities of Momchilgrad (21 m BGN) and Ardino (6 m BGN).

Infrastructure ●●●

The road network density in Kardzhali District is above the country average, but no highway goes through it. The quality of roads has improved slightly but is still very low compared to the country – 31.3% of roads were in good condition in 2014 compared to 40.5% in Bulgaria as a whole. The railway network density is one of the lowest in Bulgaria; there are territories too far removed from the railway lines which are therefore exclusively serviced by automobile transport.

The households' connectivity to the Internet has bettered in Kardzhali District. Almost 66% of households already had Internet access in 2014. Use has remained low, however, compared to the country, and barely 40% of the population aged 16–74 used the Internet in 2014.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●

Local taxes are about the same or below their national counterparts in the municipalities of Kardzhali District. The district centre of Kardzhali has low taxes: 1.3‰ on non-residential properties of companies, 2.2% on the sale of property and low taxes on vehicles. Ardino, Dzhebel and Momchilgrad are among the municipalities that impose comparatively higher taxes.

Charges for household waste are relatively high throughout the municipalities in Kardzhali District, over 10‰ for properties of legal entities, in almost all municipalities: only Chernoochene Municipality lowered it to 9‰ in 2015. The highest rate is in Dzhebel, 14‰, while it is 10‰ in the district centre of Kardzhali.

Administration ●

The municipalities of Kardzhali District are seriously lagging behind in e-services and the provision of one-stop shop services. With regard to e-services, only Momchilgrad Municipality is performing well in 2015, and Ardino Municipality provides the good example in provision of one-stop services. Cadastral map coverage is among the lowest in the country, encompassing barely 3.4% of the district's territory as of 2014: the municipalities of Dzhebel, Kardzhali, Kirkovo and Krumovgrad were partly covered.

Kardzhali District has drastically lagged behind in the 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. Nonetheless, the municipalities of Ardino, Dzhebel and Momchilgrad considerably raised their ratings in 2015 in comparison with the previous year. The municipalities of Chernoochene, Kardzhali and Kirkovo still have very low ratings.

⛪ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

⛪ Demography ●●●●

With a population of 151,329, Kardzhali was among the smaller districts in Bulgaria in 2014. The district traditionally has a very negative net migration rate of the population. An exceptionally high (probably one-off) positive net migration rate of 12.1‰ was observed in 2014, which made Kardzhali one of the few districts with a real increase in the population for the past year. There was a natural decrease but its rate was comparatively low in comparison with Bulgaria.

Kardzhali is one of the three districts with a chiefly rural population – only 41.4% live in towns and cities. The district's age structure has deteriorated, but the age dependency ratios have remained among the best in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, there are 1.3 times more people aged 65+ than people aged 0–14 and those aged 65+ equal slightly more than a quarter of the working population aged 15–64.

📖 Education ●●

Kardzhali District ranked second in Bulgaria in the number of teachers in primary and secondary schools in 2014 – 12 students per teacher. The relative share of dropouts from schools remained below 2% in 2013. The share of repeaters was still exceptionally low (0.5% in 2014). The grades from state matriculation exams were much worse in 2015 compared to previous years – the average grade fell to 4.06; the share of failures soared to 11.4%, and is now among the highest in the country.

Kardzhali District has faced a serious challenge with university graduates. The relative share of graduates aged 25–64 in the population has increased in recent years and it reached 20% in 2014, still far behind the country average. The number of students has not changed significantly in recent years, there were 1,017 of them in the district in 2014.

➕ Healthcare ●●●

The number of beds in MpHATs has remained unchanged in recent years and has continued to lag behind compared to the country – 598 beds in 2014. Simultaneously, morbidity rates have remained relatively low – there were 165 inpatients in MpHATs per 1,000 people in 2014. The number of physicians, weighed against the population, shows a marked lack of health professionals.

According to official data there have been more health-insured persons in Kardzhali District than its population

for the past six years. Such data distortions have not been observed elsewhere. The infant mortality rate has diminished in recent years to 6.3‰ in 2014.

⚖️ Security and Justice ●●●●●

According to official data, Kardzhali has been the second most secure district in Bulgaria after Smolyan; 2 crimes against the personality and 30 crimes against property, per 10,000 people, were registered in 2014. This is three times less than the country average. It can also be concluded from the data that the court works relatively efficiently and quickly. The share of criminal cases decided by the District Court and closed in the first 3 months was 99% in 2013, constituting the highest share in Bulgaria. The share of pending criminal cases was low as at the end of 2013 – 3.8% compared to the country average of 8.5%. Judges' workloads were relatively low in Kardzhali District, reaching 6.6 cases per judge per month, compared to the national average of 8.3 cases per judge, per month.

🍃 Environment ●

Kardzhali District is characterized by exceptionally low emissions of pollutants (carbon dioxide) into the atmosphere – they were barely 6.5 t/sq. km in 2014. Collected household waste per capita soared in 2013.

Population access to public sewerage connected to waste water treatment plants is less than 5%, which is an extremely low share in comparison with the national average. Less than half the population (44%) live in settlements with public sewerage, the lowest share in Bulgaria. Several waste water treatment plants are being constructed, and the ones in Kardzhali and Momchilgrad are to be launched in 2015. The expenditure on environmental protection increased in 2013 totalling 26 m BGN.

🎭 Culture ●

The indicators for cultural activities in Kardzhali District show a number of weaknesses. Visits to museums plummeted in 2014 – from 55,000 in 2013 to barely 14,000 in 2014. Visits to the theatre dropped to 20,000 in 2014. There is no cinema in the district. Visits to libraries also fell to 44,000 in 2014, which was below the country average relative to the population.

Key Indicators for the District of Kardzhali

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,327	5,111	5,501	6,139	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,988	2,734	3,002	3,483	3,333	3,762
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,465	5,643	5,895	6,266	6,842	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	12.4	16.6	21.3	25.8	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	42.5	38.3	43.8	48.6	50.6	51.5
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	41.4	36.4	41.5	44.2	47.1	49.0
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	2.7	4.9	5.1	9.0	7.0	4.9
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	31	31	29	29	29	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	753	458	613	738	705	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	391	440	500	604	746	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	9.1	11.5	29.7	54.0	45.8	65.8
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	23.8	24.6	27.0	25.5	31.3
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	2.2	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−0.2	−0.7	−2.6	−2.1	−1.8	−2.6
Net migration rate (‰)	−8.1	−6.8	−3.5	−2.4	−3.0	12.1
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	11.3	10.3	8.9	11.2	15.6	19.8
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.7
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	5.6	6.2	3.0	4.2	4.7	3.0
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	107.2	101.7	101.6	100.6	100.4	101.5
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	160.1	139.5	144.4	166.4	175.9	165.0
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	35.0	38.7	39.6	31.5	29.7	30.3
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	3.9	4.2	4.8	4.7	3.8	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	91.2	93.6	91.1	86.9	169.9	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	0.4	3.7	4.0	4.0	3.9	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	22.0	10.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	186.7	151.6	169.6	190.8	159.3	131.0

Kyustendil District

▶ Population (2014)	129,135
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,051.5
▶ Number of settlements	183
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.4

Overview

The economic development of Kyustendil District has been assessed as unsatisfactory. Kyustendil is one of the districts where the recovery of the labour market is yet to happen. Investment activity has gradually intensified, but levels have remained low. In the utilisation of EU funds it has also lagged behind. The infrastructural development of the district has been relatively good, but information technology has made little progress. Taxes are among the lowest in Bulgaria, but administrative services have not reached the necessary level. The positive grade in the field of incomes and living conditions is due to the favourable indicators for poverty and social inclusion, and not to the income levels.

The demographic trends have been among the most negative ones in the country. School education quality is low, and there is no institution of higher education in the district. Cultural life is not particularly intensive either. The good connectivity to sewage and waste water treatment plants is not sufficient to offset the harmful emission levels and to bring the district positive evaluation in environmental protection. Kyustendil is one of the three districts rated lowest in the Security and Justice category. The only field in which the district has received a very good grade is healthcare.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
Overall	●	●			
Income and Living Conditions	●	●	●	●	
Labor Market	●				
Investment	●				
Infrastructure	●	●			
Taxes and Fees	●	●	●	●	●
Administration	●	●			

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
Overall	●	●			
Demography	●				
Education	●	●			
Healthcare	●	●	●	●	●
Security and Justice	●				
Environment	●	●	●		
Culture	●	●			

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

The good grade of Kyustendil District in this category is due to the improved living conditions and social inclusion. Barely 14.6% of the district's population lived in poverty in 2012, compared to the national average of 21%. The share of the population living in material deprivation (41%) has also been below the country average of 43%.

The annual average income per household member has remained among the lowest in Bulgaria, mainly due to the low salaries in the district. As a result of the low salaries and the district's demographic picture, almost 40% of household incomes were generated by pensions compared to 27% for the country.

Kyustendil was one of the five districts where GDP per capita was less than 6,000 BGN in 2012 compared to the national average of almost 11,000 BGN. The other four were Pernik, Silistra, Sliven and Vidin.

Labour Market ●

The labour market in the District remained depressed, without any signs of recovery from the last crisis. Unlike the ongoing improvement of the employment rate on a national scale, here it continued to drop reaching 41.7% in 2014 – the lowest level since 2005. The economic activity also diminished, i.e. part of those who had not succeeded in finding any job, gradually left the labour market. The unemployment rate has been about 14–15% since 2011, but despite being high, it has remained well below the levels for Shumen (21.1%), Vidin (22.2%) and Smolyan (19.4%).

In 2014 there were 47.9 individuals aged 15–19 per 100 individuals aged 60–64, who were about to leave the workforce. The only two districts, where this ratio was worse, were Smolyan (46.6) and Gabrovo (47.0).

Investment ●

Kyustendil has the lowest grade in investment activities. FDIs in non-financial companies, relative to the local population, reached 300 euros per capita as at the end of 2013, which was ten times less than the country average and the second lowest after Montana (270 euros per capita). No municipality in the district has achieved the country's average level of utilisation of EU funds.

The sharp increase in the expenditure on acquiring FTAs is a good trend in investment activities. It exceeded 1,000 BGN per capita in 2013, for the first time since 2008. Therefore, the district does not rank last according to this indicator, as has frequently been the case in recent years. Figures, however, have lagged behind the country average of 2,490 BGN per capita.

Infrastructure ●●

The density of the road and railway networks in the district – 19.3 km, 4.0 km respectively, per 100 sq. km – has been higher than the country's average of 17.7, and 3.6 km respectively, per 100 sq. km. Notwithstanding the commissioning of the first sections of the Struma highway, the share of roads in good condition went down from 50% to 46.4% in 2013 and 2014, but remained above the national average of 39–40% over the period.

Slightly under 40% of households had Internet access in 2014: only the district of Vratsa reported a lower value – 38.5%. The relative share of individuals that used the Internet in 2014 was similar – 46.1% for the district compared to 60% for the country.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●●

The level of local taxes and fees is considerably lower than the country average; the tax environment is more favourable only in Gabrovo and Ruse. The low rate of the annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities in the district centre – Kyustendil Municipality – draws attention. This charge has amounted to 1.4‰ since 2014, provided the companies declare the number of required waste collection vessels. The only district centre with a lower rate of the annual waste collection charge is Sliven Municipality – 1.2‰. In addition to being low, the levels of local taxes and fees have stayed the same in time. The increase of the annual license tax for retailers in Bobovdol Municipality was one of the few exceptions in 2014 – from 4.00 to 5.20 BGN per sq. m.

Administration ●●

Kyustendil has traditionally got low grades in administrative services. The average Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies in the district by the AIP Foundation has been the lowest for two years in a row – 32.4 points out of 88.4, the average of all municipalities being 54.5 points in 2015. Sepaareva Bania Municipality got the lowest grade (20.7 out of 88.4 points), and Kocherinovo Municipality got the highest (54.7 out of 88.4 points).

Some improvement in both the level of local government e-services and the degree of providing one-stop shop services was reported in 2015. The share of territory included in cadastral maps is 18.9% from the district's territory, which is close to the country average of 18.1%. Over 82% of the included territories, however, are located within two municipalities only: Dupnitsa and Rila.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ●

Demography ●

The district's population slumped by 18.9% from 2005 to 2014 – from 153,600 to 129,100 people. Only four districts reported a sharper population decline during this period – Vidin (26%), Montana (20%), Lovech (19%) and Vratsa (19%).

There has been a natural decrease in the population – about two times more unfavourable than the country average for the past decade. Every year, more people leave the district than settle in it. Only the districts of Smolyan, Vidin and Vratsa had a higher negative net migration rate in 2014.

Kyustendil is one of the four districts in Bulgaria, where the number of people aged 65+ is twice as big as that of the population aged 0–14. The other districts are Gabrovo, Pernik and Vidin.

Education ● ●

Although most indicators for enrollment and retention of students were at favourable levels, the quality of education is relatively low. The average grades of school-leavers at state matriculation exams were 4.07 in 2015 compared to the country average of 4.21. The share of failures surged compared to 2014 – from 4 to 10%.

Kyustendil is one of the five districts which have no institutions of tertiary education. This could be due to the entire socioeconomic development of the district, but also to its proximity to the most reputed university centres in Bulgaria – Sofia (Capital City) and Blagoevgrad. 23.7% of people aged 25–64 had university degrees in 2014, compared to the country average of 27.0%.

Healthcare ● ● ● ● ●

The District's high rating in the field of healthcare is due to the improved indicators for access to health services.

There were about 650 beds at MpHATs in 2014, or 5.1 beds per 1,000 people, compared to the country average of 4.8. The number of cases of hospitalisation in MpHATs plunged from 238.4 cases per 1,000 people in 2013 to 165.3 cases per 1,000 people in 2014. Health insured persons are 92.1% of the district's residents, the biggest share in Bulgaria, and the infant mortality rate has traditionally been below the country average.

The district features a relatively high number of general practitioners compared to the average national levels, but a certain lack of cardiologists and internists has been noted.

Security and Justice ●

Kyustendil District, along with Pernik and Sofia (Capital City), received the lowest grade in the field of security and justice. The crime rate was lower in the district from the year 2000 to 2010 compared to the country average. The number of registered crimes against both the person and property exceeded their national counterparts in the next four years. No reversal of this trend can be seen as a tendency at this point.

82.0% of criminal cases, processed by the District Court, were closed in the first 3 months in 2013, which was the third lowest share after Blagoevgrad (80.0%) and Sofia, the capital city (81.0%). The share of pending criminal cases was also high, 10.6%, compared to the country average of 8.5%. This could partly be explained by the increased crime rate and the relatively high workload of judges who heard 1.2 criminal cases more than the national average, from 2009 to 2013.

Environment ● ● ●

About 74% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems in 2013, in 60.8% of cases connected to waste water treatment plants. These figures neared the country average, and connectivity to waste water treatment plants was even higher than the country average of 56.4%.

Emissions of carbon dioxide have gradually decreased but have remained the fourth highest among all districts – 668.9 t/sq. km in 2013 compared to the country's average of 293.9 t/sq. km. Higher levels have only been observed in the districts of Sofia (Capital City), Stara Zagora and Varna. The district's expenditure on environmental protection has traditionally been lower than the country average. It reached 23.7 m BGN in 2013, which equalled 180 BGN per capita compared to the national average of 289 BGN per capita regarding the country.

Culture ● ●

Kyustendil has lagged behind most of Bulgaria's districts in cultural development, but has performed better than the neighbouring districts of Blagoevgrad and Pernik.

The annual average number of registered visits to theatres and libraries, in relation to the population, is 2.2 and 1.8 times, respectively, lower than the country average of 319 and 518 visits per 1,000 people. The number of visits to local cinemas reached 26,000 in 2014 compared to 9,000 the previous year, or 201 visits per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 706.

Museums in the district have reported a number of visits higher than the country average. This happened for the first time in 2014, when 107,800 visits were registered, or 835 visits per 1,000 people on average, compared to 662 visits per 1,000 people for Bulgaria.

Key Indicators for the District of Kyustendil

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,236	5,772	5,991	5,915	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,537	3,355	3,534	3,508	3,593	3,966
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,454	5,891	6,219	6,444	6,880	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	13.1	16.7	19.3	14.6	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	50.0	49.5	51.4	50.4	49.8	48.6
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	45.7	45.0	43.7	43.2	42.4	41.7
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	8.6	9.0	14.9	14.2	14.9	14.2
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	40	39	39	39	40	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	550	574	592	754	1,055	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	109	111	190	247	300	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	22.9	21.4	35.2	31.7	52.4	39.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	49.1	49.8	50.0	46.4	46.4
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−9.1	−9.9	−10.8	−11.5	−11.4	−11.4
Net migration rate (‰)	−4.3	−7.6	−3.2	−4.9	−7.6	−6.7
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	17.7	17.2	20.7	19.4	22.5	23.7
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.3	4.3
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	7.5	6.6	5.2	8.0	5.2	4.0
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.8	88.2	91.8	91.3	90.5	92.1
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	176.9	159.1	160.3	231.0	238.4	165.3
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	83.1	102.5	106.1	96.6	105.2	100.0
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	11.7	9.0	9.4	10.3	10.6	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	98.2	87.7	117.5	201.6	180.1	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	56.1	59.1	60.3	60.6	60.8	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	0.0	131.9	86.0	67.7	201.3
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	51.1	75.1	108.2	114.0	139.3	146.4

Lovech District

▶ Population (2014) — 134,546

▶ Area (sq. km) — 4,128.8

▶ Number of settlements — 149

▶ Share of urban population (%) — 62.6

LUKOVIT
Letnitsa
YABLANITSA
UGARCHIN
◉ LOVECH
TETEVEN
TROYAN
APRILTSI

Overview

Lovech District lags considerably behind in economic development. The average annual income grew more slowly than it did nationwide between 2008 and 2013, and the labour market remained in deep crisis. Investment activities have gradually intensified after the crisis, but their levels have been low compared to the country average. The number of households with Internet access has remained low. The level of local taxes and fees is somewhat high for the district. Administrative services have developed relatively well.

The demographic situation has rapidly deteriorated mainly due to the negative rate of natural increase. School education is good in the district, the grades of school-leavers have been higher than the country average in recent years. The availability of health professionals is relatively good, but the number of beds in multi-profile hospitals is limited. Lovech is one of the districts where judges' workload at the Criminal Division of the District Court has been low, and trial duration has been relatively short in comparison with the country. There is no cinema in the district, and the number of visits to local theatres and libraries is lower than the country average.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Income and Living Conditions

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Labor Market

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
		●			

Investment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Infrastructure

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Taxes and Fees

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Administration

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Demography

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Education

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Healthcare

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Security and Justice

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Environment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Culture

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●

Lovech was one of the seven districts in Bulgaria where the average annual income per household member was below 4,000 BGN in 2014 despite the fact that salaries accounted for the main part of incomes (57%). The average salary was about 25% lower in the district than the country average in 2013. The average annual income per household member and the average salary grew more slowly than the country average throughout the entire period from 2008 to 2013.

GDP per capita amounted to 6,908 BGN in 2012 compared to the national average of 10,958 BGN. The share of people living in households with low work intensity was 13.5% compared to 11.6% nationally. 70.6% of the population lived in material deprivation – the highest share among all districts. Although the relative poverty line was among the lowest (2,542 BGN compared to the country average of 3,431 BGN), 20.9% of the population lived below it.

Labour Market ●

The labour market in Lovech District has been in severe crisis since 2010. Unemployment in the district was lower in 2013 and 2014, but this was due to the low economic activity of the population and not to an increase in the employment rate. The employment rate of the population 15+ fell in 2014 for the sixth successive year and dropped to 36.9% – the lowest nationwide level. Economic activity is the lowest among all districts – barely 41.1% of the population aged 15+ sought jobs or worked compared to the national figure of 54.1%.

In 2014 there were 58.6 individuals aged 15–19, who were to join the labour market, per 100 individuals aged 60–64, who were to leave it, compared to the country average of 61.9.

Investment ●●●

Lovech is one of the few districts in the country where there has been no FDI outflow since 2007. Relative to the population, the cumulative FDIs, totalling 134.8 m euros, equalled 1,002 euros per capita as at the end of 2013 compared to the country average of 3,231 euros per capita. Companies' investment in FTAs has gradually increased, reaching 155 m BGN in 2013, but has still remained far below the 2006–2008 levels.

Municipalities have achieved very good results in utilising funds under the EU operational programmes. As of 31 January 2015, they drew down a total of 132 m BGN – Lukovit and Yablanitsa utilised the most (1,875.6 BGN per capita, and 1,462.3 BGN per capita respectively), while Apriltsi and Ugarchin utilised the least – 18.2 BGN per capita, 206.6 BGN per capita respectively.

Infrastructure ●●

The district's road network density is 18.1 km per 100 sq. km of territory compared to the country average of 17.7 km per 100 sq. km. The share of roads in good condition was the highest in North Bulgaria in 2014, reaching 47.8% compared to 40.5% nationally. The railway network density was 2.6 km per 100 sq. km compared to the country average of 3.6 km per 100 sq. km.

45.8% of households had Internet access in 2014 compared with 56.7% for Bulgaria. The share of Internet users was also below the country average, but the difference was much smaller – 54.6% for Lovech District compared to the national average of 59.2%.

Taxes and Fees ●●

The level of most local taxes and fees is relatively high in Lovech District, and the immovable property taxes for legal entities and the annual waste collection charge are even higher than nationwide.

The biggest increase in the tax burden has been observed in Lukovit Municipality in recent years. The immovable property tax for legal entities, the tax on the sale of immovable property and the waste collection charge for properties of legal entities were raised there in 2013 (from 2.0 to 3.0‰ regarding the first tax, from 2.0 to 3.0‰ regarding the second and from 6.5 to 8.0‰ regarding the third). There was an increase in the vehicle tax in Lovech Municipality – from 1.10 to 1.21 BGN per kW in 2015. The annual waste collection charge was lowered from 2013 to 2015 in the municipalities of Letnitsa, Lovech and Troyan, and the decrease was considerable in the first municipality – from 10.0‰ in 2014 to 5.0‰ in 2015. The annual license tax for retailers was also lowered in Troyan Municipality.

Administration ●●●●

The cadastral map covered 74% of the district's territory as early as 2009, and Yablanitsa was the only municipality that was not included there in 2014. The only district in Bulgaria, where the cadastral map has included more territories, is Sofia (Capital City). The development of e-services is best in Troyan, and the municipalities of Apriltsi, Lovech, Teteven and Troyan have declared a high level of functioning integrated one-stop shop services.

The average grade the municipalities in Lovech District received in 2015, in the annual Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation, was 53.8 out of 88.4 points compared to the country average of 54.5 points. The municipalities of Troyan and Letnitsa received the highest grades (63.4 points, and 62.7 points respectively), and Lukovit and Lovech received the lowest ones (42.0, and 48.3 respectively).

⚖ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

⚏ Demography ●

Lovech is one of the districts facing the least favourable demographic conditions. The rates of natural increase and net migration of the population have been negative, and the number of the population shrank from 169,100 to 134,500 from 2001 to 2014, which constituted a drop of 20.42% compared to the country average of 8.71% for the same period.

Lovech has been one of the five districts in Bulgaria where the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 is over 40%, reaching 41.8% in 2014. The other districts with such a demographic burden are Vidin (46.6%), Gabrovo (43.0%), Kyustendil (40.2%) and Montana (40.7%), and the country average is 30.2%

▤ Education ●●

The development indicators for school education in Lovech District are relatively favourable. The net enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) (80.0%) was higher than the country average (78.6%), and the relative share of repeaters (0.9%) was lower than the country average in 2014 (1.4%). School-leavers from the district achieved results higher than the country average from 2012 to 2015 at state matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature. The share of fail grades at this exam has traditionally been low.

Simultaneously, Lovech is one of the districts with the lowest share of the population aged 25–64 with university degrees – 18.6% in 2014 compared to the national average of 27.0%. 238 students attended lectures in the district during the academic 2014/2015. The ratio of their number to the local population (1.77 students per 1,000 people) is the second lowest among all districts where institutions of higher education are located, after Haskovo (1.21).

✚ Healthcare ●●●●

Favourable ratios of the number of general practitioners and internists to the population have been observed in Lovech District. The ratio pertaining to cardiologists is 7,475 people per cardiologist compared to the country average of 5,765 people, but it is better than that in 16 other districts. 89.7% of the district's citizens were health insured in 2014, the average for Bulgaria being 87.1%.

The ratio of the local population to the number of beds in multi-profile hospitals for active treatment has been less favourable since 2007 compared to the country average figures, and the gap has gradually increased. The infant mortality rate has steadily remained above the country average since 2007, though it plunged in 2014 compared to one year earlier – from 16.5 to 8.4‰.

⚖ Security and Justice ●●●●

Lovech is one of the districts with the highest share of criminal cases tried by the District Court to be closed in the first 3 months – 96% in 2013 compared to the national average of 88.4%. Similar levels were registered in the districts of Gabrovo, Pleven and Smolyan, and higher ones – only in Kardzhali and Ruse. The share of pending criminal cases is also low – 6.1% compared to the national average of 8.5%. There were 6.8 cases per month, per judge, compared to 8.3 cases per month, per judge for Bulgaria.

The number of registered crimes against the person was the lowest in 2014, relative to the population, and it has been the lowest since 2005: 4.5 crimes per 10,000 people compared to the country average of 5.9 crimes per 10,000 people. The number of registered crimes against property has quickly diminished since 2011 reaching their lowest number in 2015 relative to the population – 50.5 crimes per 10,000 people compared to the country average of 89.0 per 10,000 people.

🌿 Environment ●●●

About 64.0% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems, and 41.1% of the citizens with access to sewerage were connected to waste water treatment plants in 2013. The district has lagged in terms of both indicators when compared to the country. The tertiary treatment section of the waste water treatment plant in the town of Lovech, which will increase the share of the connected population, was opened in July 2015. Expenditure on environmental protection amounted to 33.5 m BGN in 2013 or 245.5 BGN per capita compared to the country average of 288.9 BGN per capita.

Emissions of carbon dioxide decreased for a second successive year in 2013, totalling 93.8 t/sq. km: that means concentration three times lower than the country average.

🎭 Culture ●●

The number of visits to local theatres decreased in 2014 by 33% compared to the previous year, reaching 17,000. Relative to the population, this equalled 124 visits per 1,000 people, which was 2.5 times lower than the country average number of visits. Visits to libraries have gradually increased, but have remained far below the national figures. Lovech is one of the five districts in Bulgaria featuring no cinema, though films are shown to the public in summer.

Only local museums have registered a high number of visits – 115,200 in 2014, or 857 visits per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 662.

Key Indicators for the District of Lovech

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,038	5,897	6,889	6,908	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,124	3,037	2,825	2,963	3,134	3,788
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,715	5,936	6,184	6,509	6,940	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	23.9	18.0	15.7	20.9	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	49.3	47.6	46.4	44.2	42.3	41.1
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	47.8	43.8	40.7	38.3	37.8	36.9
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	3.0	8.0	12.2	13.4	10.7	10.2
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	39	39	39	39	40	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	852	901	1,094	1,076	1,136	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	735	816	946	959	1,002	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	21.8	25.2	30.3	33.7	34.6	45.8
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	36.1	40.1	43.0	44.8	47.8
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	74.0	74.0	74.0	74.0	74.0	74.0

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−7.9	−9.4	−9.7	−10.2	−10.2	−11.2
Net migration rate (‰)	−7.4	−12.2	−4.1	−3.5	−5.3	−4.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	19.6	21.6	21.6	16.4	15.8	18.6
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.3	4.5	4.4
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	4.9	5.3	2.9	3.6	2.5	3.0
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.7	86.2	89.5	88.9	88.5	89.7
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	209.7	199.3	204.9	210.2	220.1	213.4
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	68.3	86.4	70.3	57.5	54.1	50.8
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	3.7	4.1	4.4	4.4	6.1	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	168.1	227.8	380.6	249.5	245.5	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	14.5	40.2	40.9	41.1	41.1	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	112.1	92.4	140.8	148.1	186.3	124.4

Montana District

▸ Population (2014)	140,473
▸ Area (sq. km)	3,635.6
▸ Number of settlements	131
▸ Share of urban population (%)	64.3

LOM
VALCHEDRAM
BRUSARTSI
Medkovets
Yakimovo
BOYCHINOVTSI
CHIPROVTSI
MONTANA
Georgi Damyanovo
BERKOVITSA
VARSHETS

Overview

Following two years of stagnation, the labour market in Montana District started recovering slowly in 2014. Nevertheless, incomes remained low, and the share of people living in households with low work intensity remained high. Montana is the district with the lowest attracted foreign investments in proportion to the population. The tax environment is relatively favourable, but the development of administrative e-services and the infrastructure have lagged behind.

Montana is one of the districts in Bulgaria where the demographic crisis has been the most severe. In 2015 school-leavers from the district achieved their poorest results since state matriculation exams were introduced in 2007. A shortage of health professionals has been noted in healthcare. The environment is well preserved, and harmful emissions are low. Registered crimes against the person have been on the increase since 2011. Montana is the district featuring the lowest intensity of cultural activities in Bulgaria.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
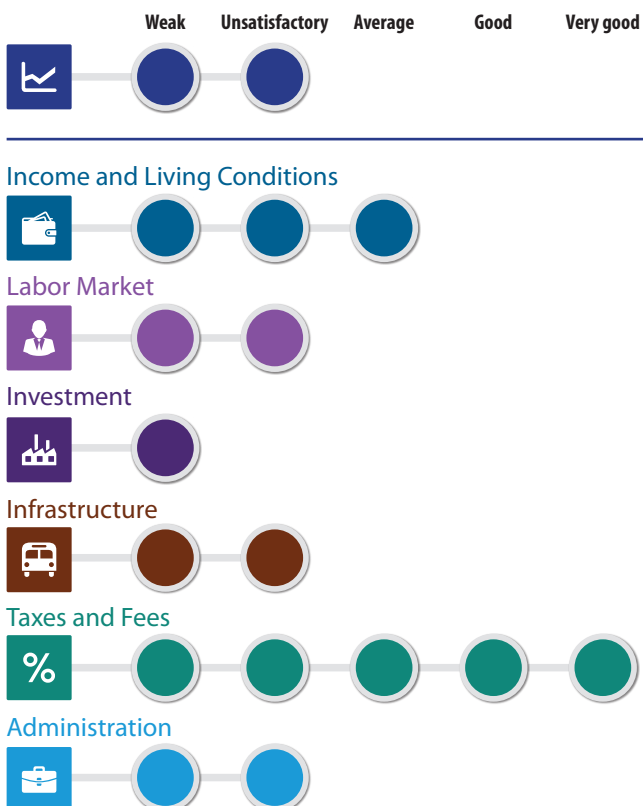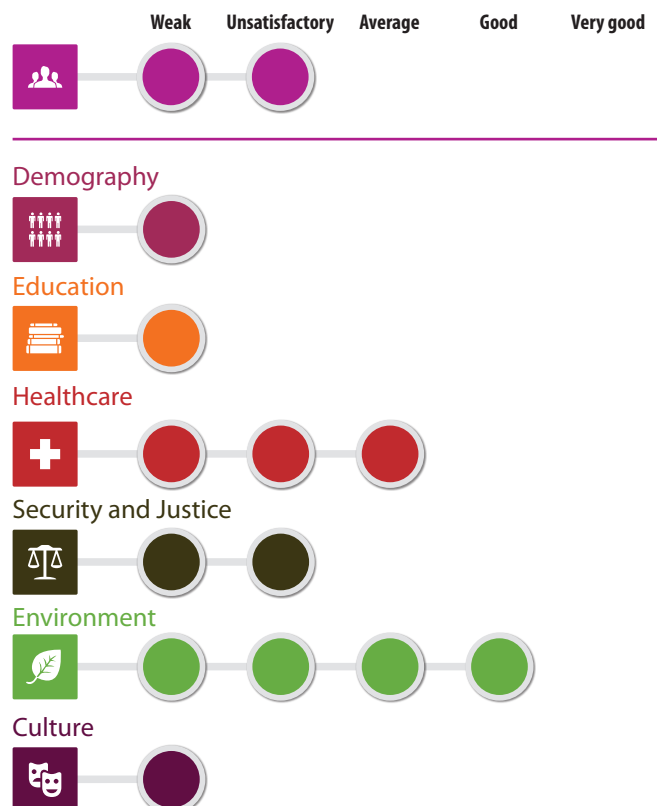
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

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 ●●●

In 2013 the average annual gross salary in the district was 6,995 BGN compared to the national figure of 9,301 BGN. The rate of its increase has been slower than the country average in recent years, but its level has remained higher than other districts featuring a similar economic profile, such as Lovech and Vidin. Due to the low employment rate, Montana is the district where salaries account for the smallest share of household incomes – they were barely 38.2% in 2014 compared to the country average of 56.2%.

The share of the population living in households with low work intensity has been almost twice as big as the country average. The relative poverty line in the district amounted to 3,287 BGN in 2012 (compared to the country average of 3,431 BGN), and 23% of the population lived below it. The share of the population living in material deprivation has been lower than its national counterpart since 2007.

👤 Labour Market ●●

Following two years of stagnation, the labour market in Montana District started recovering slowly in 2014. The population's economic activity increased, reaching 49.0%; the employment rate of the population aged 15+ has surged to 41.0%, exceeding 40.0% for the first time since 2010. However, the district has reported data far below the country average levels of employment (48.0%). A minimal decrease of the unemployment rate was reported in 2014, but it continued to be high (16,3% for the district compared to the country average of 11.4%).

In 2014 59 people aged 15–19 were to replace 100 individuals aged 60–64, who were to abandon the workforce. This demographic replacement rate was lower than its national counterpart of almost 62 per 100 for the same year.

🏭 Investment ●

Montana was the district with the lowest total of foreign direct investment attracted in 2013, in proportion to the population – 271.2 EUR per capita compared to the national average of 3,230.9 EUR per capita. Expenditure on the acquisition of FTAs has gradually recovered to pre-crisis levels though remaining considerably lower than the country average.

The rates of utilisation of EU funds on behalf of municipalities benefiting under operational programmes have been similar to the national average. As of 31 January 2015, the total of funds utilised by the municipalities in Montana District amounted to 79.9 m BGN. The municipalities of Montana and Varshets achieved the highest rates of utilisation in proportion to the population (919.5 BGN per capita and 812.7 BGN per capita respectively), while the municipalities of Yakimovo and Boychinovtsi drew down the lowest ones (17.1 BGN per capita, 73.8 BGN per capita respectively).

🚆 Infrastructure ●●

Infrastructural development has lagged behind in Montana District. The density of the road and railway networks in the district (16.6 km per 100 sq. km and 3.1 km per 100 sq. km respectively) is lower than the country average (17.7 km per 100 sq. km, 3.6 km per 100 sq. km respectively). The share of roads in good condition increased from 22.0% in 2012 to 31.4% in 2014, but is still far below the national indicator of 40.5%.

The relative share of households with Internet access was 47.9% in 2014 compared to the national average of 56.7%. The share of people (aged 16–74) who used the Internet for the past 12 months was also smaller – 56.1% compared to the national average of 59.2%.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●●

The level of local taxes and fees has been considerably lower in Montana District than nationwide. The annual license tax for retailers is two times lower than the average for the country. The taxes on the transfer of property and the immovable property tax for legal entities are closest to the country average.

Varshets is the only municipality where some local taxes and fees have been raised. Its tax on the sale of immovable property increased from 1.0% in 2012 to 2.0% in 2013 and 2.5% in 2014, and the annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities increased from 6.5‰ in 2012 to 8.5‰ in 2013. The charge was lowered in Berkovitsa (from 8.7‰ in 2012, to 8.5‰ in 2013 and 8.3‰ in 2014) and Lom (from 5.5‰ in 2012 to 4.5‰ in 2013 and 3.5‰ in 2014).

💼 Administration ●●

The development of the cadastral map stopped as early as 2010 when 12.3% of the district's territory was included compared to the country average of 15.9%. In the country as a whole the territory included in the cadastral map later increased to 18.1% in 2014 while it remained unchanged in Montana District. E-services have continued to lag behind; the municipalities of Lom and Brusartsi had the most developed ones in 2015. In one-stop shop services, the district has performed relatively well, and five out of eleven municipalities have declared a high development level.

The weighed grade of the district in the Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation is 41.7 out of 88.4 points, compared to the country average of 54.5 in 2015. The municipalities of Boychinovtsi and Valchedram received the highest grades (60.6 points, and 53.3 points respectively), and the municipalities of Yakimovo and Lom received the lowest ones (26.5 points, and 30.6 points respectively).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Montana is one of the districts in Bulgaria where the demographic crisis has been the most severe. The population decreased by 25.5% from 2001 to 2014, the fourth highest value after the districts of Razgrad, Vidin and Vratsa.

The rate of natural increase is also the most unfavourable one after Vidin District, lower than that in districts with worse age structure, such as Lovech and Gabrovo. The number of people leaving the district diminished from 2011 to 2014, but it has continually impacted the demographic background.

64.3% of the district's population lived in towns and cities in 2014 compared to the national average of 73.1%.

Education

Although the net enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) is higher than in most districts, and the share of repeaters is comparable with the country average, the quality of education is not good. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education was 3.3% in 2013 compared to the country average of 2.4%, and the results achieved by school-leavers at state matriculation exams were relatively low. The lowest grades were given in 2015 when the share of failures reached the district's record high level of 10.7% (compared to the national average of 6.4%), and the average grade fell to Good (4.04) compared to Good (4.21) for Bulgaria.

Montana is one of the five districts without institutions of higher education. This is one of the reasons for the low share of people with university degrees, aged from 25 to 64 – 17.1% in 2014 compared to the country average of 27.0%.

Healthcare

The number of general practitioners is relatively big, but the ratio of the number of cardiologists (12,770 people per cardiologist) and internists (7,024 people per internist) to the local population was more unfavourable in 2014 than the country averages of 5,767 people per cardiologist and 5,902 people per internist.

The number of beds at multi-profile hospitals for active treatment has remained constant in recent years. There were 5.1 beds per 1,000 people in 2014, while the national figure was 4.8 beds per 1,000 people. Simultaneously, the workload of hospitals has been high. 36,727 people were hospitalised in 2014, which accounted for 261.5 per 1,000 people of the population – the highest figure in Bulgaria.

Health insured persons were 87.4% of the district's population in 2014, which corresponds to the national average.

Security and Justice

The actual workload of penal judges at the District Court was 5.1 cases per month per judge in 2013. Lower levels of this indicator were only observed in the districts of Targovishte (3.5 cases) and Pernik (4.4 cases). Nevertheless, the share of pending criminal cases remained high – 10.3% compared to 8.5% for Bulgaria. The share of criminal cases closed in the first 3 months gradually increased in 2012 and 2013 and reached 91.0%, which was higher than the country average of 88.4% in 2013.

Registered crimes against the person in Montana District (in proportion to the population) fluctuated about the country's average levels till 2010, but systematically exceeded the country average from 2011 to 2014. Crimes against property, however, remained relatively limited, and 63.4 crimes of this type per 10,000 people were registered in 2014 compared to 89.0 per 10,000 people in the country.

Environment

58.7% of the district's population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems in 2013 (compared to the national average of 74.7%), and 34.2% of it was connected to waste water treatment plants (compared to the country's average of 56.4%).

The expenditure on environmental protection began to increase in 2012 in the district, reaching the country's average levels of 288.9 BGN per capita in 2013. The project for the construction of a water cycle in the town of Montana, which includes modernisation and equipment of the waste water treatment plant in the town, was concluded in 2015.

Montana was among the districts with the lowest emissions of carbon dioxide in 2013 – 6.5 t/sq. km, compared to the national average of 293.9 t/sq. km. Only the districts of Dobrich, Kardzhali and Smolyan had lower concentration of this type of harmful emissions.

Culture

Montana is the district with the lowest intensity of cultural activities in Bulgaria.

In proportion to the population size, registered visits to museums and libraries in the district are almost half the country averages of 662 visits to museums per 1,000 people and 518 visits to libraries per 1,000 people in 2014. Visits to the theatre were about 11,000 in 2014, and their number was lower in proportion to the population only in the districts of Pernik and Smolyan (excluding Sofia District, where there is no theatre). These 81 visits per 1,000 people are about four times fewer than the country's average of 319. In 2014, Montana remained one of the five districts featuring no cinema.

Key Indicators for the District of Montana

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,255	5,152	5,951	6,044	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,838	3,037	2,961	2,994	3,276	4,117
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,641	6,028	6,289	6,572	6,995	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	23.4	23.0	24.9	23.0	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	47.7	46.2	45.5	46.1	46.8	49.0
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	42.9	40.6	39.1	39.2	39.0	41.0
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	10.1	12.2	14.1	14.9	16.7	16.3
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	32	32	31	31	31	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	670	669	1,128	997	1,077	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	163	160	173	217	271	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	19.1	22.7	29.0	37.5	36.4	47.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	24.8	25.8	22.0	29.1	31.4
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	10.2	12.3	12.3	12.3	12.3	12.3

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−10.5	−12.3	−12.3	−12.8	−11.7	−12.8
Net migration rate (‰)	−4.8	−6.2	−3.2	−3.4	−2.7	−3.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	15.7	15.4	15.8	18.1	18.4	17.1
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.1	4.1	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.2
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	5.6	6.8	3.2	9.4	6.4	6.9
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.9	85.4	87.9	87.1	86.1	87.4
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	226.5	230.4	245.1	255.3	260.4	261.5
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	90.8	110.6	95.3	77.1	81.5	63.4
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	10.7	9.4	10.0	12.5	10.3	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	52.0	45.4	79.5	172.0	262.8	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	4.2	33.3	33.9	34.0	34.2	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	67.7	71.5	66.3	49.8	67.0	81.2

Pazardzhik District

▶ Population (2014)	267,918
▶ Area (sq. km)	4,456.9
▶ Number of settlements	117
▶ Share of urban population (%)	62.5

Map labels: PANAGYURISHTE, Strelcha, Lesichovo, SEPTEMVRI, BELOVO, PAZARDZHIK, VELINGRAD, RAKITOVO, PESHTERA, BRATSIGOVO, BATAK

Overview

The district recovered quickly following a drop in the economy at the beginning of the crisis and the gross production per capita already exceeded its pre-crisis levels in 2010. The employment rate, however, did not start to recover until 2013. Domestic and foreign investment has been two times lower than the country's average figures, but the district has performed relatively well in the utilisation of EU funds. Pazardzhik has retained its position among the top ranking districts in the share of roads in good condition. Local taxes and fees are higher than the country average.

The age dependency ratio is still more favourable compared to many other districts in Bulgaria. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary schools is higher than nationwide. Pazardzhik is the district with the lowest share of people with university degrees after Silistra. The cases of hospitalisation in multi-profile hospitals for active treatment are below the country's average levels, and so is the share of health insured persons. The crime rate is low in the district, and criminal procedures are relatively quick. Pazardzhik is one of the districts with the smallest share of the population connected to waste water treatment plants. There is no cinema in the district.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
Overall	●	●			
Income and Living Conditions	●				
Labor Market	●	●	●	●	
Investment	●	●			
Infrastructure	●	●	●		
Taxes and Fees	●	●			
Administration	●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
Overall	●	●	●		
Demography	●	●	●		
Education	●	●			
Healthcare	●	●	●	●	●
Security and Justice	●	●	●	●	
Environment	●	●	●		
Culture	●				
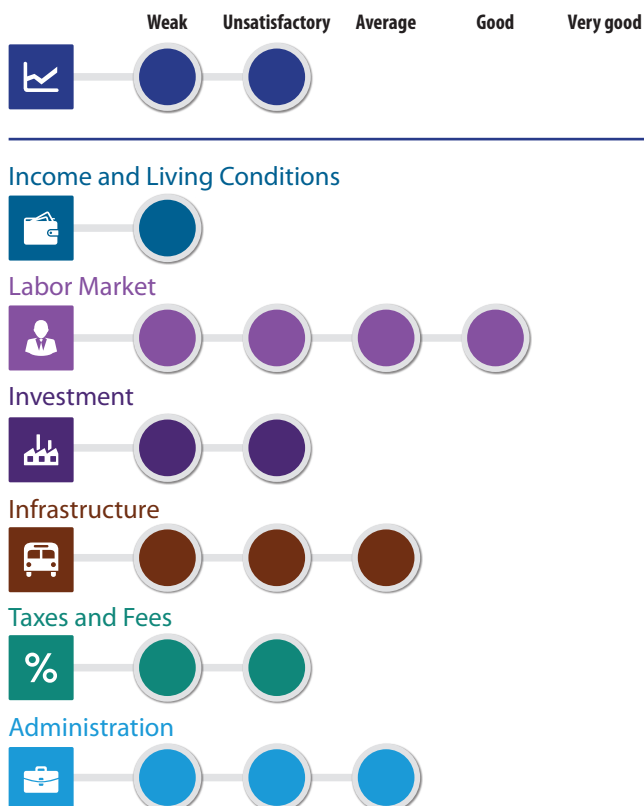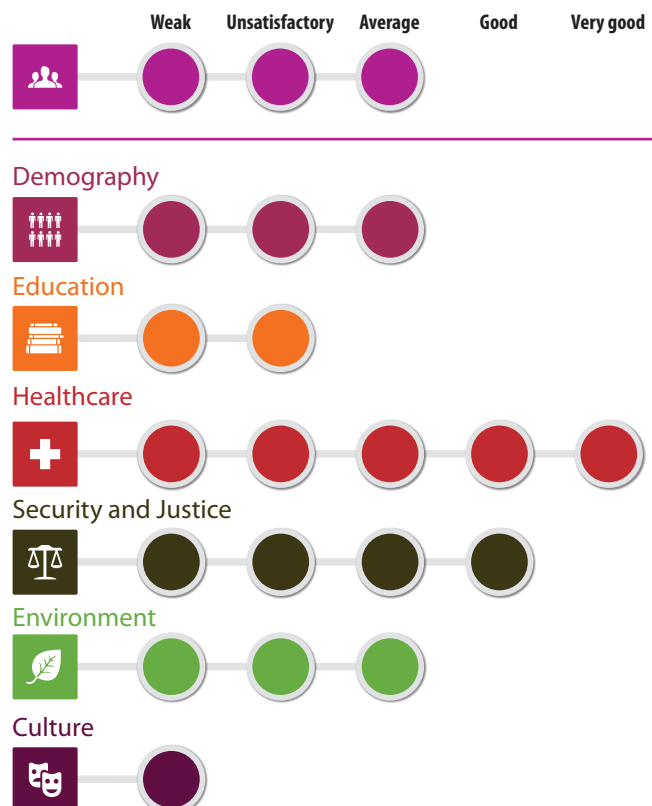
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ● ●

Income and Living Conditions ●

The district recovered quickly following a drop in the economy at the beginning of the crisis. The nominal GDP per capita grew by about 10% per annum from 2010 to 2012, while the country's average growth was less than 6%. Nonetheless, GDP per capita in the district lagged behind the general indicator for the country. Even though GDP exceeded its pre-crisis levels as early as 2010, the income per household member shrank in 2010 and 2011. Households' incomes dropped again in 2014 following a slight increase in 2012 and 2013, despite the recovery of employment.

Living conditions are among the least favourable in Bulgaria. The relative share of the population living in households with low work intensity increased in 2012 to 31.9%, thus ranking the district first (Vidin District ranked first in 2011). The relative share of people living in material deprivation has constantly increased since 2009 to reach 59% in 2012, the highest figure among all districts, 43% for Bulgaria. The share of people living below the district's poverty line is 30.8% compared to the national average of 21%, which ranks Pazardzhik among the districts with the highest share of poor people.

Labour Market ● ● ● ●

Although unemployment in the district surged above the country's average level from 2010 to 2012, it plunged in 2013 to 10.4% in 2014 compared to the national average of 11.4%. Employment data also demonstrated a favourable growing trend after 2012, and the employment rate of the population 15+ (47.3%) neared the country average of 48% in 2014.

Pazardzhik was the district with the highest demographic replacement rate in 2014 – 71.4% compared to the country average of 61.9%. That means that 71 youngsters per 100 people about to leave the labour market will join it in future years.

Investment ● ●

The number of companies relative to the population continued to be smaller compared to the national average level – 39 per 1,000 people compared to 52 per 1,000 people in 2013. Expenditure on acquiring FTAs increased after the drop of 2010, but stayed two times lower than those in other districts from 2011 to 2013. Unlike most districts, foreign investment grew considerably after the crisis, and its rate per capita was four times bigger at the end of 2013 compared to 2007–2008 values. The district has utilised EU funds relatively well. As of 31 January 2015 the municipalities in Pazardzhik District received 553.2 BGN per capita as beneficiaries under the opera-

tional programmes, compared to 564.9 BGN per capita for the country. The municipalities of Panagyurishte and Peshtera have drawn down most funds (2,506.9 BGN per capita, 1,871.2 BGN per capita respectively), and Batak Municipality has utilised least funds (170.1 BGN per capita).

Infrastructure ● ● ●

Although the number of roads in good condition has diminished compared to last year, Pazardzhik District was still among the top-performing districts in 2014. The share of roads in good condition was 49.8% in the district compared to 40.5% for Bulgaria, and Pazardzhik ranked fourth.

Connectivity of households with Internet and its use by the population have remained relatively limited. 49.6% of households had access to the Internet in 2014 compared to 56.7% in the country. The share of people (aged 16 to 74) that have used Internet for the past 12 months was 52.2% compared to the country average of 59.2%.

% Taxes and Fees ● ●

Local taxes and fees were higher than the country average in 2015 as well. The rate of the annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities, higher by 35% than nationwide, is the reason. The local tax on the sale of immovable property is about 10% higher. The annual license tax for retailers is lower by 40% in 2015 – 9.05 BGN per sq. m compared to the country average of 12.72 BGN per sq. m. Vehicle taxes are also about 15% lower in the district.

Administration ● ● ●

The level of development of local government e-services has stagnated for the past year, and the administrative one-stop shop services have been similar to the predominant level in Bulgaria. The district has performed well in the share of territory included in cadastral maps. That territory was 26.8% in 2014 compared to the country average of 18.1%.

The district received a relatively low grade in the Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. It got 46.9 points out of 88.4 in 2015 compared to the country average of 54.5 points. The Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies was highest in Rakitovo Municipality (62.0 points), followed by Peshtera (56.0 points) and Bratsigovo (52.0 points), and the municipalities of Batak and Belovo got the lowest grades (26.1 points, 26.5 points respectively).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●●

The rate of natural increase was close to the national average in 2014 (–5.3‰ compared to –5.7‰ for Bulgaria). The population of the district also diminished due to the number of people leaving to other districts and abroad, and the net migration rate was –4.9‰ in 2014. Population ageing has followed the national trends, although the proportion of people aged 65+ to people aged 0–14 is 129.4% (compared to the national rate of 144.3%), and that regarding the population aged 15–64 is 29.1% (compared to the national figure of 30.2%).

Education ●●

The net enrolment rate of the population (grades 5th through 8th) grew in 2014 to reach the national level – 78.9%. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education has however been higher than the country average – it reached 3.3% in 2013 compared to 2.4%. Similarly to other districts, the result at state matriculation exams in the district worsened in 2015. Students achieved the grade of Good (4.2) that is identical to the country average.

Pazardzhik is one of the five districts, alongside Kyustendil, Montana, Targovisthe and Vidin that have no university. Simultaneously, Pazardzhik is one of the districts, after Silistra, with the lowest number of people with university degrees among individuals aged 25–64 – 15.3% compared to the country average of 27% in 2014.

Healthcare ●●●●●

Pazardzhik District has a deficiency of cardiologists, but the availability of such specialists has gradually bettered in recent years. While about 26,000 people per cardiologist were treated in 2001 in the district, in 2014 this figure was 9,923 people per cardiologist compared to the country average of 5,765 people.

The share of health-insured persons remained below the country average in 2014 as well. The availability of beds in multi-profile hospitals for active treatment has improved with time and 5.5 beds in MpHATs per 1,000 people were available in 2014 compared to the country average of 4.8 per 1,000 people. Simultaneously, the cases of hospitalisation slumped from 279.3 people per 1,000 people in 2013 to 152.6 per 1,000 people in 2014, thus dropping below the country average of 175.4 per 1,000 people.

Security and Justice ●●●●

The district has been relatively safe to live in, judging by the number of registered crimes. 4.7 crimes against the person per 10,000 people compared to 5.9 for the country were registered in 2014, and 58.9 crimes against the property compared to 89.0 for Bulgaria.

Judges had relatively small workloads in 2013 as well; 7.4 cases were heard per month, per criminal judge, at the District Court while the nationwide average was 8.3 cases per judge, per month. The smaller number of cases has probably been the reason for quicker ruling. 94% of criminal cases were closed in the first 3 months in 2013 compared to the country average of 88.4%, and the share of pending cases was 6.9% compared to the country average of 8.5%.

Environment ●●●

Harmful emissions have been relatively low in Pazardzhik District. 37.9 tonnes of carbon dioxide per sq. km were released into the atmosphere in 2013 compared to Bulgaria's average of 293.9 tonnes. The share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems is still low – 70.1% in 2013 compared to 74.7%. Pazardzhik is one of the districts with the smallest share of the population connected to waste water treatment plants – 27.3% in 2013 compared to 56.4%.

The expenditure on environmental protection was almost 50 m BGN in 2013, which constituted 2% of all spending on environmental protection in Bulgaria. Relative to the population, the expenditure was 183.2 BGN per capita compared to 288.9 BGN per capita.

Culture ●

The cultural life in the district is not very intensive. Pazardzhik is still one of the five districts with no cinema. Visits to theatres increased but continued to be half of the national figures – 163 per 1,000 people in 2014 compared to 319 per 1,000 people for Bulgaria. Visits to libraries were 229 per 1,000 people in Pazardzhik District compared to the country average of 518 per 1,000 people. The number of visits to museums dropped in 2014, and was also less than the country average – 606 visits per 1,000 people compared to 662 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Pazardzhik

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,616	6,518	7,009	7,430	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,690	2,989	2,972	3,460	3,755	3,570
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,620	6,087	6,368	6,862	7,264	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	23.0	23.7	29.4	30.8	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	55.1	54.8	53.2	51.1	51.1	52.8
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	49.9	46.3	43.6	41.8	44.4	47.3
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	9.4	15.5	18.1	18.3	13.0	10.4
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	37	38	38	39	39	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,048	910	1,236	1,265	1,227	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	903	1,161	1,446	1,581	1,719	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	23.8	25.9	38.7	40.4	36.1	49.6
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	43.4	43.0	44.0	52.6	49.8
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	0.8	6.0	19.4	25.1	25.1	26.8

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−2.5	−3.4	−4.6	−4.5	−4.2	−5.3
Net migration rate (‰)	−4.1	−6.0	−2.5	−3.2	−4.7	−4.9
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	15.2	15.2	16.9	16.8	16.6	15.3
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.2
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	6.4	6.5	4.6	6.8	6.9	5.8
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	84.3	81.4	84.4	83.4	82.6	83.6
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	138.6	129.4	135.4	265.0	279.3	152.6
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	60.5	76.3	70.4	59.9	66.9	58.9
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	2.7	4.0	2.2	7.9	6.9	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	72.1	115.1	127.6	180.6	183.2	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	25.9	26.0	26.1	27.2	27.3	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	74.9	77.2	98.1	86.0	123.3	163.1

Pernik District

▶ Population (2014)	127,872
▶ Area (sq. km)	2,394.2
▶ Number of settlements	172
▶ Share of urban population (%)	78.9

TRAN
BREZNIK
PERNIK
Kovachevtsi
ZEMEN
RADOMIR

Overview

The district's economic development has stagnated and investment activities are still subdued. Incomes are relatively high, but this is mainly due to the daily occupational migration to the capital city. The unemployment rate has increased for the sixth successive year. The infrastructural profile of the district is improving. The tax environment is relatively favourable, but the transparency rating of the local administration and the development level of administrative services have remained low.

Some fields of the district's social development, such as culture and healthcare, are affected considerably by the proximity to the capital city. A certain deficiency of staff and hospital beds has been observed in healthcare. Visits to local theatres have dropped, and those to libraries and museums are far below the country's average levels. The demographic background is highly unfavourable. Pernik has traditionally performed poorly in the field of education. The indicators for the state of the environment and those in the field of security and justice are better than nationwide.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
(overall)	●	●	●		

Income and Living Conditions — Weak, Unsatisfactory, Average

Labor Market — Unsatisfactory, Average

Investment — Weak

Infrastructure — Weak, Unsatisfactory, Average, Good

Taxes and Fees — Weak, Unsatisfactory, Average, Good

Administration — Weak, Unsatisfactory, Average

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
(overall)	●	●	●		

Demography — Weak, Unsatisfactory

Education — Weak, Unsatisfactory

Healthcare — Weak, Unsatisfactory, Average, Good, Very good

Security and Justice — Weak, Unsatisfactory, Average

Environment — Weak, Unsatisfactory, Average, Good

Culture — Weak

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●

The average annual incomes are the second biggest after those in the capital city – 5,941 BGN per capita compared to the country average of 4,813 BGN. NSI data for household budget structure show that this is partly due to the high pension levels in the district. Households' pension incomes amount to 4,220 BGN per household compared to 3,010 BGN for Bulgaria. Self-employment incomes are also among the highest in the country. The higher incomes of the daily migrant workers to the capital city offset the lower salaries of the district's residents who work in it.

Although the share of the population living in households with low work intensity is almost half of the national figure (6.8% compared to 11.6%), over half the district's population (55%) lives in material deprivation. The relative share of people living below the district's poverty line was similar to the national levels of poverty in 2012 – 22%.

Labour Market ●●

The main factors that impact the labour market in Pernik District are the unfavourable demographic background and the proximity to the capital city. The demographic replacement rate in Pernik is among the three least favourable ones in Bulgaria – 49 people aged 15–19 per 100 people aged 60–64.

Economic activity has gradually neared the country average levels, but that is mainly due to the increasing unemployment. The district's unemployment increased in 2014 for the sixth successive year, reaching 13.1% compared to the national average of 11.4%. The employment rate remained steady from 2009 to 2012 but in 2013 and 2014 it lagged behind the recovery process that had started in Bulgaria.

Investment ●

Pernik is one of the ten districts where investment activities can be referred to as poor. Companies' expenditure on the acquisition of FTAs was three times lower in 2013 than in 2008. The cumulative rate of FDIs dropped by about 30 m euros in 2012 and 2013 to 229.7 m euros, featuring the lowest level since 2006.

As of 31 January 2015, the municipalities in the district managed to draw down 61.3 m BGN as beneficiaries under EU operational programmes. This totalled 479.4 BGN per capita on average compared to the country average of 564.9 BGN. The municipalities of Pernik and Tran reached the highest level of drawdown (550.5 BGN per capita, 494.5 BGN per capita respectively). One of the two municipalities in Bulgaria without a single lev from

EU operational programmes is located in Pernik District: Kovachevtsi Municipality.

Infrastructure ●●●●

The density of the road and railway networks is about 33% percent higher than the country average. There were 24.1 km of roads and 4.8 km of railway lines per 100 sq. km in 2013. The quality of roads has been considerably better than its national counterpart since 2010, and about 50% of roads were in good condition in 2014 compared to the national average of 40.5%.

Pernik District has solely lagged in Internet connectivity and use. 52.8% of households had Internet access in 2014 compared to the country average of 56.7%. While the difference regarding Internet access has gradually dropped, the relative share of the population that used the Internet for the past year has grown more slowly than the country average.

Taxes and Fees ●●●●

The level of local taxes and fees in Pernik District is comparatively favourable in comparison with the national average. Immovable property taxes for legal entities and vehicle taxes are comparable with the country averages. The annual license tax for retailers and the tax on the sale of immovable property are considerably lower than those in most of Bulgaria.

The rate of the annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities was lowered from 2012 to 2015 in three municipalities: Breznik (from 12.0 to 5.0‰), Kovachevtsi (from 8.0 to 6.0‰) and Radomir (from 6.0 to 5.0‰). There was an increase in Pernik Municipality only – from 6.0 to 6.5‰ in 2014.

Administration ●●●

The share of the district's territory included in cadastral maps was barely 4.5% in 2014; it included the territories of two municipalities only – Pernik and Breznik. This constitutes the smallest territory covered after Vidin (2.1%), Kardzhali (3.4%) and Haskovo (3.8%). Pernik has made no progress in this respect since 2009. The Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation is low – 42.1 points out of 88.4 points, with the national average at 54.5 points. The municipality of Breznik got the highest grade (53.6 points), and Zemen Municipality got the lowest – 21.1 points.

Three of the six municipalities in the district have declared a high level of development in one-stop shop services – Breznik, Pernik and Tran. E-services are best developed in Pernik Municipality.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●

Pernik is one of the most urbanised districts in Bulgaria. 78.9% of the population lived in towns and cities in 2014 compared to the country average of 73.1%, and higher concentration has only been observed in Gabrovo, Sofia (Capital City) and Varna.

Simultaneously, the population age structure is utterly unfavourable. The net migration rate has been negative since 2009 – the number of people leaving the district is higher than that of people settling there. Pernik became the fourth district in 2014 where people aged 65+ were twice as many as people aged 0–14. The other districts were Gabrovo, Kyustendil and Vidin. The ratio of the oldest population to that of working age is also among the most unfavourable ones. Less than three individuals of working age per pensioner have been available since 2011.

Education ●●

The relative share of repeaters and the share of dropouts from primary and secondary education have traditionally been lower than the national average. Nonetheless, the enrolment rate is among the lowest, and the quality of education is unsatisfactory. Average grades at state matriculation exams have been lower than Bulgaria's average since 2008. A record high share of unsatisfactory grades was registered in 2015 – 8.1% compared to the country average of 6.4%.

Pernik was one of the districts with the lowest share of people with university degrees in 2014 – 17.8%. Sofia District – the other district neighbouring the capital city – also has a low share of graduates (15.7%). The European Polytechnical University, opened in 2010, has failed to be acknowledged as a significant institution of higher education as yet, in terms of the number of students taught.

Healthcare ●●●●●

Similarly to other districts from the region, such as Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil, a considerably less favourable ratio of the number of cardiologists to the population is found in Pernik District. However, the availability of general practitioners and internists is better than the country average. 88.6% have been health insured compared to the country average of 87.1%.

Pernik is the only district in Bulgaria where less than 10% of the population was hospitalised in multi-profile hospitals for active treatment in 2014. This is probably due to both the district's proximity to the capital city and the exceptionally limited number of beds available at local hospitals – barely 2.3 beds per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 4.8.

Security and Justice ●●●

The sixth biggest share of pending criminal cases at district courts was registered at the end of 2013 – 10.1% compared to the country average of 8.5%. In comparison with the low real workload of penal judges – 4.4 cases per judge per month, compared to the national average of 8.3 in 2013 – this could be considered an indicator of a relatively less effective judicial system. Simultaneously, the share of criminal cases closed in the first 3 months was 89% in 2013, close to its national counterpart.

The number of registered crimes against property was slightly higher than the country average to reach 94.6 crimes per 10,000 people in 2014 compared to Bulgaria's average of 89. The number of crimes against the person dropped twice compared to 2010.

Environment ●●●●

The share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems was 79.2% in 2013 compared to the country average of 74.7%. Connectivity to waste water treatment plants was also high – 74.2% compared to the country average of 56.4%. In 2013 the annual expenditure on environmental protection per capita soared more than twice in the district, compared to the previous two years amounting to 422.7 BGN per capita, the fourth highest value in Bulgaria.

Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere decreased faster in Bulgaria in 2012 and 2013 compared to Pernik District. These emissions reached 297.8 t/sq. km in 2011 in the district, relative to the territory (73.3% of the country average) and 250.9 t/sq. km in 2013 (85.3% of the country average).

Culture ●

Pernik is one of the eight districts where the development level of culture has received a poor grade. Contrary to the national trend of a rising number of visits to theatres established from 2012 to 2014 (by 19.3%), there was a drop in the number of visits to local theatres in 2014 by 31% compared to the annual average number of visits from 2010 to 2013. The registered visits to libraries and museums were about half the country average in 2014 – 518 visits per 1,000 people, 342 respectively. Pernik is one of the five districts in Bulgaria where there is no cinema.

Key Indicators for the District of Pernik

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,607	6,077	6,471	5,784	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,119	4,194	4,473	5,021	5,764	5,941
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,710	5,890	6,080	6,392	6,719	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	17.2	19.0	17.0	22.3	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	49.3	49.0	50.5	51.9	52.3	53.1
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	46.7	45.6	46.5	46.8	45.5	46.2
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	5.3	6.9	8.0	9.9	13.0	13.1
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	38	38	37	38	39	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	962	941	707	853	983	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,755	1,777	1,945	1,865	1,796	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	22.5	15.4	35.0	42.3	48.4	52.8
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	48.7	41.7	52.0	48.9	49.5
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−8.8	−9.6	−11.3	−11.7	−11.1	−11.2
Net migration rate (‰)	0.0	−1.9	−1.6	−1.7	−0.8	−1.7
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	16.8	16.3	16.7	16.6	16.9	17.8
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.3
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	5.8	5.7	4.0	4.5	5.3	5.6
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	90.4	88.6	88.8	88.3	87.5	88.6
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	107.8	100.8	100.6	103.6	103.4	99.3
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	101.7	97.2	93.9	99.5	103.7	94.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	7.7	8.6	8.5	7.8	10.1	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	147.9	294.7	204.2	182.6	422.7	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	71.6	71.5	74.0	74.1	74.2	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	71.6	78.4	88.4	84.1	68.6	55.0

Pleven District

▶ Population (2014)	257,556
▶ Area (sq. km)	4,653.3
▶ Number of settlements	123
▶ Share of urban population (%)	66.8

Overview

Pleven is the most developed district in Northwestern Bulgaria. Incomes are higher than the country average, and living conditions are relatively favourable. The labour market recovery from the crisis has lagged. The rates of employment and economic activity decreased in 2014. Pleven is one of the few districts in Bulgaria where investment in 2012 and 2013 was significantly higher than the pre-crisis level, though it lagged behind the country average levels. The development of administrative services was better than in the neighbouring districts, but local taxes and fees were higher.

Although the negative demographic processes are clearly visible, Pleven has the best demographic state in the Northwestern Region. The quality of school education is unsatisfactory despite the high rate of enforcement of compulsory school attendance. Healthcare is well developed in the district. The availability of health professionals and hospital beds is well provided, and the share of health-insured persons is high. Pleven is one of the districts with the lowest expenditure on environmental protection. Notwithstanding the higher level of the crime rate, judicature is relatively fast. Cultural life is not particularly intensive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Income and Living Conditions

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Labor Market

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Investment

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Infrastructure

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Taxes and Fees

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Administration

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Demography

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Education

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Healthcare

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	●

Security and Justice

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Environment

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Culture

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

⬚ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ● ●

⬚ Income and Living Conditions ● ● ● ●

The average annual income per household member amounted to 5,043 BGN in 2014, in Pleven District, which was about 5% higher than the country average. The average annual gross salary is lower by about 24% than the national average, but households' incomes originating from self-employment and other activities have partly offset this slippage.

10.2% of the population lived in households with low work intensity in 2012, in comparison with the country average of 11.6%. The share of people living in material deprivation (40.9%) and the share of people living below the poverty line (17%) are also below the country average.

The GDP per capita amounted to 6,141 BGN in 2012 compared to the country average of 10,958 BGN.

⬚ Labour Market ● ●

Unemployment has been lower than it was nationwide since 2012, and it fell to 9.0% in 2014. The main reason is not the growing employment rate, but rather the diminishing economic activity of the population: 46.7% of the population 15+ were active in economic terms in 2014 compared to 48.8% in 2013. The employment rate of the population 15+ dropped to 42.5% in 2014 compared to the country average of 48.0%. Nevertheless, Pleven has remained the district with the highest employment rate in the Northwestern Region of Bulgaria.

The demographic replacement rate, measuring the ratio of the number of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64, has decreased more slowly than the country average. The drop for the district was from 108.0 to 58.2% from 2001 to 2014, and the country average was from 123.6 to 61.9%.

⬚ Investment ● ●

Pleven is one of the few districts where investment in 2012 and 2013 was significantly higher than pre-crisis levels. Cumulative FDIs reached 311 m euros as at the end of 2013 compared to less than 200 m euros before the crisis. Nonetheless, investment activities have remained lower than the country average for both FDIs and investments in FTAs.

As of 31 January 2015, the municipalities in the district managed to draw down 149.5 m BGN as beneficiaries under EU operational programmes. Thus the lag from previous periods has been offset and the rate of utilisation relative to the population is already higher than the country average (580.5 BGN per capita compared to 564.9 BGN per capita). The best-performing municipalities in this respect are Knezha (2,243.3 BGN per capita) and Nikopol (2,233.1 BGN), and the worst-performing ones are Gulyantsi (79.3 BGN per capita) and Levski (104.6 BGN per capita).

⬚ Infrastructure ● ●

The road network density totalled 17 km per 100 sq. km in 2013, which was close to the national density of 17.7 km per 100 sq. km. The railway network density was 4.4 km per 100 sq. km compared to the country average of 3.6 km per 100 sq. km. The quality of roads in the district has improved in recent years, and 39.0% of roads were in good condition in 2014 compared to the country average of 40.5%.

The biggest slippage has been noted with regard to information technology. 43.8% of households had access to Internet in 2014: only the districts of Vratsa, Kyustendil and Targovishte have shown a worse result (38.5%, 39.9% and 41.8% respectively). Pleven was one of the seven municipalities where over half the population did not use the Internet in 2014.

% Taxes and Fees ● ●

Some local taxes in Pleven District are significantly higher than their counterparts in the rest of the Northwestern Region of Bulgaria. Higher levels than the country average of both the immovable property tax for legal entities and the local taxes on the sale of immovable property have been observed.

The immovable property tax for legal entities in Pleven Municipality has been the third highest in Bulgaria since 2013. It was raised in 2013 from 1.90 to 3.90‰, and only the municipalities of Zlatitsa (Sofia District) and Avren (Varna) had higher rates – 4.50‰ each. The levels of most other taxes and fees have remained steady in recent years. The annual waste collection charge, which was lowered in the municipalities of Dolni Dabnik (2014), Nikopol (2014) and Pleven (2013), and raised in Iskar Municipality (2013), is an exception.

⬚ Administration ● ● ●

The cadastral map included 10.0% of the district's territories in 2014 compared to the country average of 18.1%; new territories have not been included since 2008, and the municipalities of Dolni Dabnik, Iskar, Pordim and Knezha have not been included in the cadastral map at all. The development of e-services has continued to lag, and only Pleven Municipality has achieved a relatively good result.

The grade that the district's municipalities received in the 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation was 52.4 points out of 88.4 compared to the country average of 54.5% points. Pleven and Knezha got the highest grades (62.6 points, 50.7 points respectively), and Gulyantsi and Levski got the lowest ones (33.1 points, 37.1 points respectively).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●

Pleven features the biggest population and the best demographic state among the districts of the Northwestern Region of Bulgaria. Nevertheless, the negative demographic processes have remained clearly visible similarly to those in the districts of Lovech, Montana, Vidin and Vratsa. The population's net migration rate and the rate of natural increase remained negative throughout the period 2001–2014. As a result, the population slumped by 21% in 2014 compared to 2001, which was more than double compared to the country average of 9%. The age structure of the population has continued to deteriorate – the ratio of those aged 65+ to those of working age (15–64) neared 40% in 2014 compared to its national counterpart of 30.2%.

Pleven is the most urbanised district in the Northwestern Region. 66.8% of the district's population lived in towns and cities in 2014 compared to the country average of 73.1%.

Education ●●

The share of children enrolled in grades 5th through 8th was higher than the country average in 2014 (82.9% compared to 78.6%). Simultaneously, the relative shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education is also higher than it is for Bulgaria.

The results of school-leavers at the state matriculation exams have continually been lower than the country average, which demonstrates the relatively low quality of secondary education. The average grade for the district was Good (4.04) in 2015 compared to the national average of Good (4.21). The share of failures exceeded 10% for the first time in 2015 – the country average was 6.4%.

There were 1,892 university students in the district in 2014 and the share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education reached 23.6% compared to the country average of 27.0%.

Healthcare ●●●●●

Pleven is one of the districts featuring the best-developed healthcare. The share of health-insured persons was 89.5% of the district's residents in 2014, the country average being 87.1%. Pleven is the district with the best ratio of the number of general practitioners to the number of residents: only the capital city features a higher number of cardiologists per capita. The number of internists has been insufficient, but part of it was offset in 2014.

The number of beds in multi-profile hospitals for active treatment increased to 1,723 in 2014, which provided the second best ratio to the population in Bulgaria – 6.7 beds per 1,000 people compared to the national average of 4.8 beds. The only district with more beds is Plovdiv. Notwithstanding the availability of physicians and

beds, the infant mortality rate was higher than the country average in 2014 – 8.5‰ for the district, compared to 7.6‰ for Bulgaria.

Security and Justice ●●●

Pleven is one of the districts with the highest share of criminal trials at the District Court closed in the first 3 months – 96% in 2013 compared to the national average of 88.4%. The actual workload of penal judges has gradually diminished, and has been lower than the country average since 2011. The share of pending cases has also been lower than the country average of 8.5%, amounting to 5.3% in 2013 – the lowest one after the districts of Ruse and Vratsa.

There were more crimes against the personality and against the property than there were nationwide in 2013 and 2014.

Environment ●●●

Pleven is one of the districts with the lowest expenditure on environmental protection: 24.1 m BGN in 2013 or 92.3 BGN per capita compared to the country average of 288.9 BGN per capita. The low investment in environmental protection also explains the limited provision of the population with public sewerage systems and waste water treatment plants. 56.6% of the district's population lived in settlements with access to public sewerage systems in 2013, and 41.2% were connected to waste water treatment plants. The construction of a waste water treatment plant started in the town of Belene in 2015, which is likely to improve these indicators in the following years.

Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere were relatively low in 2013 – 52.8 t/sq. km, the country average being 293.9 t/sq. km.

Culture ●●

Despite being the biggest district in Northwestern Bulgaria in population size, Pleven is not among the leading ones in intensity of cultural life. The registered number of visits to local theatres, cinemas and libraries, as a proportion to the population, was about half the country average in 2014. Nonetheless, most indicators set off positive trends: visits to libraries have increased every year since 2009, and visits to cinemas have increased faster than the country average.

Pleven exceeds country averages for the number of visits only in museums. 183,000 visits to local museums were registered in 2014, which amounted to 710 visits per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 662.

Key Indicators for the District of Pleven

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,388	5,094	6,197	6,141	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,275	4,206	3,902	5,091	5,431	5,043
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,890	6,093	6,308	6,646	7,046	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	21.8	21.5	17.5	17.0	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	47.0	45.6	46.2	45.9	48.8	46.7
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	43.2	39.7	40.7	41.2	42.9	42.5
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	8.1	12.8	12.0	10.3	12.1	9.0
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	35	35	35	35	36	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,150	1,056	1,079	1,833	1,618	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	594	532	652	736	1,208	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	28.4	27.2	35.8	37.3	47.6	43.8
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	28.5	29.2	31.0	38.8	39.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−7.5	−9.0	−9.6	−10.1	−9.1	−10.0
Net migration rate (‰)	−5.2	−5.3	−2.5	−4.4	−4.7	−4.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	15.5	17.5	18.5	21.7	22.9	23.6
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.1
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	4.9	5.9	4.7	8.0	8.7	7.9
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.7	84.9	89.4	88.8	88.2	89.5
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	204.7	196.7	207.1	277.8	308.7	235.9
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	88.0	101.5	109.4	94.9	113.1	92.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	9.4	10.2	7.3	6.2	5.3	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	45.4	52.2	46.9	88.1	92.3	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	39.4	39.6	41.0	41.0	41.2	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	149.6	192.2	184.5	214.0	388.3
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	66.7	79.3	108.0	125.7	140.5	138.3

Plovdiv District

▶ Population (2014)	676,892
▶ Area (sq. km)	5,972.9
▶ Number of settlements	224
▶ Share of urban population (%)	74.9

Overview

Plovdiv District has better economic indicators than the country averages. The economic activity and the employment rate have increased in the district, but unemployment has remained relatively high. The district has a serious inflow of foreign capital which has intensified for the past year. Some municipalities in the district (Hisaria, for example) have utilised EU funds very intensively while the district centre of Plovdiv has continued to lag. There has been some improvement in the local authorities' transparency, but the development of administrative services has lagged.

The population of Plovdiv District has continued to diminish despite the positive net migration rate in recent years. However, the number of graduates relative to the workforce has increased, which is important for the district's development. Hospital infrastructure is among the best in Bulgaria. A drop in the number of crimes against the person and against property has been observed for the past year. The indicators regarding the development of cultural activities in Plovdiv District demonstrate some positive trends, but also challenges.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Income and Living Conditions
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Labor Market
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Investment
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Infrastructure
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Taxes and Fees
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Administration
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Demography
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Education
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Healthcare
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	●

Security and Justice
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Environment
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Culture
Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

⊵ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ● ● ●

💳 Income and Living Conditions ● ● ● ●

GDP per capita was 8,920 BGN in 2012, making Plovdiv the eighth richest district in Bulgaria. Income growth has lagged in recent years compared to the country averages. Salary incomes dominate the income structure of the district. The average annual gross salary per employed person rose to reach 7,922 BGN in 2013.

In 2012 46.2% of the district's residents lived in material deprivation, i.e. they faced difficulties in meeting their basic needs. The relative share of people living below the poverty line fell to 19% in 2012, but it should be noted that the district's poverty line is relatively high compared to the other districts. Income inequality has slightly increased, and the ratio of the incomes of the richest to those of the poorest 20% of households was 5.4 times in 2012.

👤 Labour Market ● ● ● ●

The recovery of the labour market in Plovdiv District has been steady for the past several years (2012–2014). The economic activity reached 56.4% in 2014 which was higher than the country average. The employment rate of the population aged 15+ has increased since 2011 to reach 49% in 2014. Unemployment slightly shrank but remained relatively high – the rate was 13.1% in 2014.

The demographic replacement rate was 64.7% in 2014, which means that there were 65 people aged 15–19 about to join the workforce per 100 people aged 60–64, about to leave it.

🏭 Investment ● ● ●

Plovdiv is among the districts with the biggest amount of attracted FDIs. The inflow of foreign capital has been among the steadiest in recent years and has intensified. Several industrial zones around Plovdiv City constitute a positive factor in this regard. The expenditure on the acquisition of FTAs slightly fell to 1.5 billion BGN in 2013.

The municipalities of Plovdiv District have continued to lag in utilisation of EU funds under operational programmes – the funds they were paid reached 324 m BGN as of 31 January 2015. The municipalities of Hisaria, Krichim, Sopot and Rakovski have the highest absorption rate – 48 m BGN, 26 m BGN, 27 m BGN and 53 m BGN, respectively, and Plovdiv Municipality has been the worst-performing district centre in terms of utilising EU funds (42 m BGN), weighed against the local population.

🚌 Infrastructure ● ● ●

The road network density in Plovdiv District is not very high, but the Trakia highway, completed in 2013, is a development factor raising the district's potential. As at the end of 2014, however, most of it was in bad condition on the territory of Plovdiv District. Still, about 45% of roads in the district were in good condition in 2014, a relatively high proportion compared to the country average. The railway infrastructure is well developed – railway network density is among the highest in Bulgaria. Internet use increased in 2014 and 58.4% of the people aged 16–74 had used it for the past 12 months.

% Taxes and Fees ● ●

The taxes on properties of companies are relatively low in the municipalities of Hisaria (0.6‰), Perushtitsa (1.0‰), Asenovgrad (1.3‰) and Kaloyanovo (1.4‰) in 2015, and Hisaria Municipality's tax rate is the lowest in Bulgaria. The taxes on the sale of immovable property vary from 1.5% in Kaloyanovo Municipality to 3.0% in the municipalities of Karlovo, Krichim and Sadovo. Taxes are higher in the district centre of Plovdiv (1.8‰ for the immovable property tax of companies and 2.5% for the sale of immovable property). Vehicle taxes are also relatively high. Annual waste collection charges are relatively low in the municipalities of Hisaria (1.51‰), Maritsa (4.20‰) and Plovdiv (5.30‰), and very high in the municipalities of Kuklen, Krichim and Laki (22.50‰, 20.00‰ and 16.00‰ respectively).

💼 Administration ● ● ●

The municipalities of Plovdiv District have performed relatively well in e-services and the provision of one-stop shop services, but the development of these services has lagged in recent years. Provision of e-services is well developed in the municipalities of Asenovgrad, Plovdiv, Rakovski and Sopot, and one-stop services are well developed in the municipalities of Asenovgrad, Hisaria, Laki, Maritsa, Plovdiv and Saedinenie. 24.4% of the district's territory was included in the cadastral map in 2014, coverage being higher in the municipalities of Asenovgrad, Karlovo, Maritsa and Plovdiv.

Plovdiv District improved its 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. Asenovgrad and Plovdiv are the best-performing municipalities, and the worst-performing ones are those of Brezovo, Hisaria and Kaloyanovo.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Demography ●●●●

Plovdiv is the second biggest district in Bulgaria with almost 677,000 people (2014), 75% living in towns and cities. The population of Plovdiv has invariably diminished in recent years, due to the negative natural increase (–4.3‰ in 2014) and the falling positive net migration rate (0.5‰ in 2014). Nonetheless, Plovdiv has remained one of the few districts with the number of settling people higher than that of people leaving, and the reasons are mainly due to the search for better education and job opportunities.

The age dependency ratios have remained relatively steady in recent years. There were almost 1.4 times more people aged 65+ than children (aged up to 14) in 2014; they were also about 30% of the working population (aged 15–64). The birthrate was slightly higher than the country average in 2014 – 9.8‰.

Education ●●●

Both the number of schools and the number of teachers have dropped in recent years in Plovdiv District. There were 14.3 students per teacher in 2014. The net enrolment rate of the population (grades 5th through 8th) has gradually decreased and it was 78.8% in 2014. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education remained relatively high in comparison with the country average in 2013 – 2.8%, and the relative share of repeaters increased to 2.3% in 2014. In 2015 grades at state matriculation exams, with the district average at 4.31, were slightly above the country average. The relative share of failing grades, i.e. those lower than Average 3.00, increased to 7% in 2015.

Plovdiv District is the second biggest university centre in Bulgaria. The number of students exceeded 40,000 in 2014. The relative share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education, has increased, thus in 2014 one in four people in the work force was a university graduate.

Healthcare ●●●●●

In recent years both the number of hospitals and that of beds at multi-profile hospitals grew in Plovdiv District – hospital beds increased by more than 500 only in 2014, reaching 4,629. The district is Bulgaria's leader in number of beds relative to the population. The number of hospitalisations at MpHATs decreased substantially in 2014 to 242.2 per 1,000 people.

The district features better availability of health professionals compared to the country average. The share of health insured persons has kept relatively constant levels in the district – 87.2% in 2014. The infant mortality

rate is slightly higher than the national average (8.3‰ in 2014).

Security and Justice ●●●●

According to official data, Plovdiv District is relatively safe compared to the country, and the number of crimes has dropped for the past year. 5 crimes against the person per 10,000 people were registered in 2014 and 70 against property. Data implies that the courts work relatively efficiently and quickly. The share of criminal cases, tried by the District Court and closed in the first 3 months, was 95% in 2013, and the share of pending criminal cases was 5.4% as at the end of 2013, the country average being 8.5%. Judges' workloads have gone down in recent years in Plovdiv District, reaching 8.2 cases per judge per month, compared to the country average of 8.3 cases per judge per month, in 2013.

Environment ●●●

Plovdiv District is not on the list of districts with the highest concentration of harmful emissions. Carbon dioxide emissions fell in 2013 to 128 t/sq. km. Household waste collected per capita increased in 2013 and remained above the average country levels – approximately 496 kg per capita of serviced population.

Almost 80% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems in 2013. The population with access to public sewerage systems connected to waste water treatment plants is almost 55%. Two urban waste water treatment plants function in the district, in Plovdiv City and in the town of Hisaria, and a waste water treatment plant was opened in the town of Sopot in 2010. The expenditure on environmental protection increased in the district in 2013 and has thus reached 115 m BGN.

Culture ●●●

The indicators regarding cultural activities in Plovdiv District have improved in recent years. Visits to theatres have consistently increased to reach 200,000 in 2014. Visits to cinemas have also increased to reach almost 550,000. A certain drop has been noted in visits to museums that shrank to 238,000 in 2014. Despite the surge in visits to libraries to 177,000, their number has remained low. This number of visits to libraries and museums, weighed against the district's population, shows visit levels two times lower compared to the country.

Key Indicators for the District of Plovdiv

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,561	7,704	8,696	8,920	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,561	3,745	3,657	3,988	4,514	4,410
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,054	6,462	6,889	7,418	7,922	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	14.5	20.9	20.7	19.0	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	50.8	50.8	50.9	53.3	55.6	56.4
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	48.3	46.5	46.4	47.3	48.1	49.0
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	5.1	8.5	8.8	11.2	13.4	13.1
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	51	51	50	51	51	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	2,040	1,724	2,144	2,514	2,291	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,228	1,600	1,847	1,972	2,436	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	30.1	35.3	47.5	55.1	60.7	45.0
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	49.8	47.5	48.0	43.7	44.5
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	20.4	20.8	24.4	24.4	24.4	24.4

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−2.4	−3.6	−3.8	−4.5	−4.0	−4.3
Net migration rate (‰)	−0.9	−4.1	0.2	1.4	3.1	0.5
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	20.6	22.5	23.6	22.6	23.4	25.1
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.3
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	4.5	3.9	3.2	5.0	4.9	4.6
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	89.6	87.2	88.4	87.7	86.5	87.2
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	229.6	227.7	228.0	327.8	353.0	242.2
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	80.2	96.3	81.6	73.2	78.2	69.9
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	3.3	3.7	5.9	5.3	5.4	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	135.1	116.2	131.8	151.6	169.1	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	50.6	50.8	54.1	54.3	54.6	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	441.9	771.8	799.0	702.5	768.7	808.1
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	141.2	150.8	204.2	189.7	249.8	299.1

Razgrad District

► Population (2014)	119,821
► Area (sq. km)	2,639.7
► Number of settlements	119
► Share of urban population (%)	47.2

KUBRAT
ZAVET
ISPERIH
Tsar Kaloyan
RAZGRAD
SAMUIL
LOZNITSA

Overview

In Razgrad GDP per capita remained considerably below Bulgaria's average in 2012. Residents' incomes were below the country average as well. One of the lowest employment rates and the sixth highest unemployment in Bulgaria characterise the labour market. The lag in the investment process constitutes one of the reasons for the limited employment. The levels of local taxes and fees in the district's municipalities are still above the country average, but the local administration is more transparent compared to the other districts.

The rate of natural increase in Razgrad District has been lower in recent years and has dropped faster compared to the country average. The district ranks third with the lowest share of urban population after Kardzhali and Silistra. For the last three years Razgrad District has managed to keep its top rank in Bulgaria for the highest enrolment rate in grades 5th through 8th. Nevertheless, both the share of dropouts and the number of unsatisfactory grades are high. The deficiency of some key health professionals is serious, and the morbidity rate is considerably higher than it is nationally. Cultural life in the district is less developed compared to the other districts.
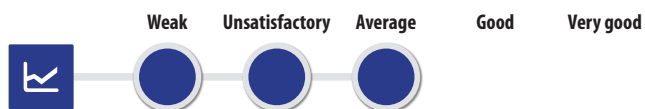
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
(trend)	●	●	●		
Income and Living Conditions	●	●	●		
Labor Market	●	●			
Investment	●	●			
Infrastructure	●	●	●	●	●
Taxes and Fees	●	●			
Administration	●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
(people)	●				
Demography		●	●		
Education		●			
Healthcare		●			
Security and Justice		●	●	●	
Environment		●			
Culture		●	●		
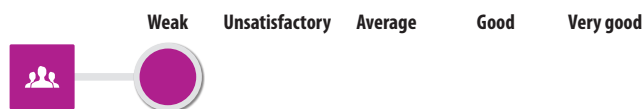
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●

Although the district's economy was affected by the negatives of the world economic crisis it quickly recovered in the following years. The gross domestic product per capita grew by 33% from 2008 to 2012, which was almost double the growth of the country average (17%) for the same period of time. Nonetheless, the GDP per capita of 7,452 BGN is considerably below the country average of 10,958 BGN. Households' salaries and incomes have also increased but remain at about 80% of the country average.

High unemployment and low economic activity have also entailed less favourable living conditions. While the share of the population living in material deprivation was below the national average in 2007, during the crisis it surged and kept higher levels in the following years. Razgrad was among the districts with the highest share of the population living in material deprivation in 2012 – 56.5%, compared to the country average of 43.0%.

Labour Market ●●

Razgrad has traditionally performed poorly with regard to the labour market. Economic activity has remained below the average level: 50.3% in 2014 compared to the country average of 54.1%. The employment rate followed the trends for the past 15 years, but stayed below the average rates. The employment rate reached 41.4% in 2014 compared to the country average of 48.0%. In line with the low economic activity and the lower employment rate, the unemployment rate has remained the sixth highest in Bulgaria – 17.7% compared to the country average of 11.4% in 2014.

Investment ●●

Razgrad is among the six districts with the smallest number of companies relative to the population. Domestic investments are almost half the national average and in 2013 they had still not reached their pre-crisis level. Cumulative FDIs were three times lower than the country average as early as 2007. In 2013 the district attracted foreign direct investment amounting to 130 m euros, or 1,078.8 euros per capita, compared to the country average of 3,230.9 euros per capita.

Razgrad District ranked sixth in terms of EU funds utilised by municipalities, relative to the population: 744.1 BGN per capita (a total of 90 m BGN) as of 31 January 2015, compared to 564.9 BGN per capita for the country as a whole. The highest absorption rates were in the municipalities of Kubrat and Loznitsa: 1,861 BGN per capita and 1,791 BGN per capita respectively, while they were lowest in the municipalities of Tsar Kaloyan and Zavet: 26 BGN per capita and 65 BGN per capita respectively.

Infrastructure ●●●●●

The district's road network density is relatively high though the quality of roads is lower. While the share of roads in good condition in Razgrad District was higher than the country average in 2010 and 2011, this share dropped to 33.1% in 2014 compared to the country average of 40.5%.

The district has good indicators for Internet access and use of the global network. Moreover, Razgrad ranked second in 2014 after the capital city, in the share of the population that had used the Internet for the past 12 months.

Taxes and Fees ●●

The average level of local taxes and fees in the municipalities of Razgrad District is above the country average, which has negatively impacted the business environment. Nevertheless, those municipalities have not changed their rates for the past 4 years, which is an exception with respect to the entire country.

Yet, some taxes are lower than the national averages. Among those is the annual license tax for retailers: 9.15 BGN per sq. m in Razgrad District compared to the country average of 12.72 BGN per sq. m. The lowest rate of this tax is in Tsar Kaloyan Municipality, and the highest ones are in the municipalities of Isperih and Razgrad.

Administration ●●●

With regard to all indicators evaluating the administration, Razgrad District achieved close, but still higher, results. 18.9% of the district's territory was included in the cadastral map in 2014, compared to the country average of 18.1%; the only difference is that nationally the cadastral map has grown to include more territories, while no changes were made to it in the past five years in Razgrad District.

In 2015 the rating for e-services and one-stop shop services is a bit above the country average, but while no change has been observed in the district for the past three years, there has been an increase in the country as a whole.

The Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies was assessed at 56.3 points in 2015 (out of the maximum of 88.4 points) compared to the country average of 54.5 points. Razgrad is distinguished as the most transparent municipality (71.4 points), and the administrations of the municipalities of Samuil and Tsar Kaloyan are considered the least transparent – 26.2 points and 28.7 points respectively.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography ● ●

The rate of natural increase in Razgrad District has been lower in recent years and has dropped faster compared to the country average. The rate of natural increase was −7.6‰ in 2014 compared to −5.7‰ for Bulgaria. Razgrad was also among the five districts with the lowest net migration rate in 2014 (−5.3‰). Age dependency ratios were more favourable than the country average in 2014 but they have soared for the past 15 years, and the difference has decreased.

Razgrad District ranks third with the lowest share of urban population, following Kardzhali and Silistra. The share of urban population was 47.2% in 2014 compared to the country average of 73.1%. Population density also stayed at a considerably lower level than the country average.

Education ●

Razgrad District has managed to keep its top rank in Bulgaria with the highest enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th). The rate was 85.2% in 2014 compared to the nationwide figure of 78.6%. In 2014 the share of failed students at state matriculation exams was still double the country average: 12.9% compared to 6.4%. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education also exceeded the average values in 2014 (3.1% compared to the country average of 2.4%).

There is one institution of higher education in the district, a branch of the University of Ruse; 337 students studied in it in 2014. The district ranked fourth in Bulgaria in 2014 with the lowest share of those aged 25–64 with university degrees – 16.2% compared to the country's average of 27.0%.

Healthcare ●

The evaluation of the district in the category of Healthcare is relatively poor. 2,349 people per general practitioner were treated in 2014, while the nationwide figure was 1,596 people per general practitioner. Particularly problematic is the insufficient number of certain key health professionals. For instance, the district ranks first in terms of the smallest number of cardiologists relative to the population. There were 23,964 people per cardiologist in 2014, four times the country average (5,765 people).

The number of beds in hospitals, relative to the population, is commensurate with the country average, but morbidity rates are relatively high. The number of hospitalisations also stayed above the country average in 2014 – 227.2 per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 175.4 per 1,000 people.

Security and Justice ● ● ●

Data from the 15 years of monitoring have demonstrated serious fluctuations in the number of registered crimes. Crimes against the personality went up from below country average levels (till 2010) to 20% higher than the nationwide average. Their number was 7.1 per 10,000 people in 2014 compared to the country average of 5.9 per 10,000 people. The number of crimes against property, however, slumped from 93.4 per 10,000 people in 2000 to 46.5 per 10,000 people in 2014, compared to the national average of 89 per 10,000 people.

Regarding the judicial system, the share of cases closed in the first 3 months is higher than the country average (93.0% compared to 88.4%); however, the share of pending cases was commensurate with the country average in 2013 (8.7% compared to 8.5%). Simultaneously, judges' workload of criminal cases stayed at a lower level – 6.2 cases per judge of the District Court per month, their average number for Bulgaria being 8.3 per month.

Environment ●

Emissions of carbon dioxide have stayed among the lowest in Bulgaria: over five times below the country average in 2013. Both the low share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (41.8% in 2013 compared to the country average of 74.7%) and the limited access to waste water treatment plants (41.8% of the population had access to public sewerage systems compared to the country average of 56.4%) have continued to be a problem.

Having started two big projects under the Environment OP in 2013, Razgrad District reported a two and a half times increase in expenditure on the environment, but this rate has remained below the national average level relative to the population.

Culture ● ●

The number of visits to libraries has been the only indicator in this category, regarding which Razgrad District has performed better than the national average. Visits to libraries reached 562 per 1,000 people in 2014 compared to the country average of 518 per 1,000 people. Visits to theatres neared the country average, while visits to museums were half the country average, relative to the population. A travelling cinema visited Razgrad for the first time in 2014.

Key Indicators for the District of Razgrad

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,211	5,765	6,595	7,452	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,985	2,621	2,753	3,131	3,264	4,000
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,721	6,071	6,488	7,065	7,533	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	19.8	22.8	19.2	14.7	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	48.4	47.6	51.1	51.7	50.3	50.3
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	39.7	36.8	40.8	40.6	39.9	41.4
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	18.1	22.6	20.3	21.4	20.7	17.7
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	34	33	33	33	33	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	819	663	1,020	1,363	1,314	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	934	1,106	962	1,028	1,079	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	24.7	27.9	42.2	58.1	51.2	59.4
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	34.9	34.6	32.0	34.5	33.1
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	18.0	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9	18.9

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−4.4	−6.0	−6.4	−6.2	−7.0	−7.6
Net migration rate (‰)	−8.7	−13.2	−7.9	−5.4	−5.9	−5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	15.2	12.1	12.9	14.0	13.7	16.2
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.0	3.9	4.1	3.8	3.9	3.9
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	11.1	11.1	7.6	12.1	12.1	10.8
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	92.3	87.6	91.1	90.0	89.3	90.3
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	217.7	196.0	202.4	210.5	232.0	227.2
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	72.9	75.6	61.9	50.8	55.2	46.5
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	6.9	5.3	8.2	9.1	8.7	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	53.3	73.5	63.8	69.5	175.7	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	40.8	40.8	41.9	41.9	41.8	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	204.4	280.4	148.7	196.3	258.1	288.0

Ruse District

▶ Population (2014)	228,735
▶ Area (sq. km)	2,803.4
▶ Number of settlements	88
▶ Share of urban population (%)	77.4

Overview

GDP per capita decreased by over 14% in 2009 and 2010 in the district, and although the economy recovered in the successive years and exceeded its pre-crisis production levels, GDP per capita has still lagged behind the country average. Foreign direct investments per capita are half the country average, and the district ranks second in terms of least funds per capita utilised by municipalities. The district's labour market features diminishing activity and employment shrinkage. Being an important transport centre, the district's infrastructure is more developed than in most districts, but the quality of roads has im-

proved slowly and has remained below country average levels.

Ruse was among the districts with the oldest population in 2014 as well. It has continued to be among the five districts with the highest share of urban population. The insufficient number of general practitioners still poses a problem in the field of healthcare. Generally, the number of crimes against the person and against property, registered in time, has been smaller than the country average relative to the population. Courts are not too overloaded and work more effectively. The district's cultural life is relatively well developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Income and Living Conditions

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Labor Market

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Investment

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Infrastructure

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	●

Taxes and Fees

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	●

Administration

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Demography

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Education

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Healthcare

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Security and Justice

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Environment

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Culture

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

Ruse District ranked ninth in GDP per capita in 2012 with 8,442 BGN. Still, the district's GDP was below the country average of 10,958 BGN per capita. The difference from the rest of Bulgaria is due to the GDP slump in 2009 and especially in 2010, when it shrank by more than 14%. Salaries and households' incomes have remained close, but below, country averages. Their growth, compared to the pre-crisis year of 2008, has also been slower than it was nationwide.

The indicators regarding living conditions and poverty are relatively favourable. The share of people living in households with low work intensity was two times lower than the country average in 2012 – 6% compared to 11.6%. The share of the population living in material deprivation was also considerably lower – 26.6% compared to the country average of 43%, and the share of people living below the district's poverty line was 16.9% compared to the country average of 21%.

Labour Market ●●

Unemployment was higher in the district than the country average before the crisis, but it has quickly decreased since 2009 and is currently below than the national average. The unemployment rate was 10.8% in 2014 compared to the country average of 11.4%, and the reason for the drop was not increasing employment, but rather the diminishing economic activity of the district's population. The economic activity rate decreased by 3.8 pp from 2008 to 2014, reaching 48.3%, while its national counterpart increased by 0.3 pp, reaching 54.1% in 2014. Employment in the district has also constantly decreased since 2008, reaching 43.1% in 2014, or almost 5 pp less than the country average. The demographic replacement rate deteriorated in 2014 to 56.6%, meaning that there were 57 people aged 15–19 about to join the labour market, per 100 people aged 60–64, about to leave it. The national indicator was 61.9% in 2014, or higher by 5.3 pp than that of Ruse.

Investment ●●

Investment in the district has been lower than the country average. Moreover, the district exhibits relatively low entrepreneurship activity. 47 enterprises per 1,000 people operated in 2013 in Ruse, while the national figure was 52 per 1,000 people. Expenditure on acquiring FTAs per capita was lower by 25% than the country average in 2013, and cumulative foreign direct investments per capita were about two times smaller than they were in the other districts. Ruse District has utilised the least EU funds after Kyustendil. The funds under operational programmes, utilised by the municipalities of Ruse District, amounted to 308.9 BGN per capita as at the end of January 2015 (a total of 70 m BGN) compared to the national average of 564.9 BGN per capita. Byala Municipality has utilised most – 1,469 BGN per capita, and Vetovo Municipality has drawn down least – 37.7 BGN per capita.

Infrastructure ●●●●●

Ruse is an important transport centre. The road and railway networks feature high density and are located relatively evenly along the entire territory of the district. The Ruse–Gorna Oryahovitsa and Ruse–Varna railways lines, the river port and the Danube Bridge (between Ruse and Giurgiu) are the most significant in economic terms. Despite the relatively intensive traffic, the quality of roads has remained below the country average. 30.2% of roads were in good condition in 2014 compared to 40.5% for Bulgaria. Access to the Internet and its use are better than the nationwide averages. 64.6% of households had Internet access in 2014 compared to the country average of 56.7%, and 62.7% of residents had used the Internet the previous year compared to Bulgaria's average of 59.2%.

Taxes and Fees ●●●●●

The general level of local taxes and fees is lower in Ruse District than the country average, and has generally remained unchanged in recent years. The biggest difference, relative to the country average, is in the annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities – lower than the country average by almost one third in 2015. The immovable property tax for legal entities is lower by 25%. The municipalities of Tsenovo and Byala have generally preserved lower local taxes and fees; higher in the municipalities of Dve Mogili and Borovo.

Administration ●●

Generally speaking, administrative services in the district have not been evaluated highly. The territory included in cadastral maps is half the country average – 10.2% of the district's territory was included in cadastral maps in 2014 compared to the country average of 18.1%. The development of administrative one-stop shop services is commensurate with the country average, but the level of local government e-services is considerably lower. In 2015, the Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (54.9 points) is also about the average (54.5 out of the maximum of 88.4 points). Ruse Municipality has the highest result – 62.2 points while they are lowest in the municipalities of Byala and Vetovo – 22.1 points and 27.2 points respectively.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Demography ●●●

Despite not being among the districts with the most severe demographic crisis, Ruse District has demonstrated less favourable indicators regarding the age dependency for years compared to the country average. The rate of natural increase is also unfavourable – it is –8.5‰ compared to the country average of –5.7‰ – but over the years the fall has been slowing down relative to the national figure. The net migration rate, despite the negative values in 2014: –0.7‰ has remained higher than the national average. Ruse is one of the five districts with the largest share of urban population – 77.4% of the population lived in towns and cities in 2014 compared to the country average of 73.1%.

Education ●●●

The enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) is 78.6%, and the share of dropouts from primary and secondary education equals the national average of 2.4%. The share of repeaters was 1.1% in 2014 compared to Bulgaria's average of 1.4%. The share of poor grades at state matriculation exams was lower in 2015: 5.2% compared to the country average of 6.4%. this comparison, however should take into account the surge of this indicator for the country (mainly due to the sudden increase in the districts of Kardzhali, Kyustendil and Silistra). At the same time, average grades at state matriculation exams equalled the national average of Good (4.2). With 10,000 students at the University of Ruse, Ruse is among the districts with a relatively high share of university students to the population. At the same time, the share of people with tertiary education is lower than the country average (23.6% compared to 27%), which implies that not all students continue to live and work in the district after graduation.

Healthcare ●●●

Ruse is among the four districts with the highest insufficiency of general practitioners. 2,061 people per general practitioner were treated in 2014, while the nationwide figure was 1,596 people per general practitioner. The district's healthcare also suffers from the lack of some key health professionals. For instance, one specialist in Internal Medicine takes care of 5,902 people on average in Bulgaria, while this figure is 9,531 people for Ruse. In 2014 the district still had a smaller number of beds, 3.7 beds per 1,000 people in multi-profile hospitals for active treatment, compared to the country average of 4.8 per 1,000 people. Simultaneously, morbidity rates of the population have also gone down judging by the number of hospitalisations. In view of the lack of health professionals, however, the relatively small number of cases of hospitalisation could imply that many people have resorted to health services outside the district.

Security and Justice ●●●●

The number of registered crimes against the person and property has traditionally been lower than the country averages, relative to the population. 4.1 crimes against the person per 10,000 people, compared to 5.9 crimes for the country, and 85.2 crimes against the property per 10,000 people, compared to the country average of 89, were registered in 2014. Ruse District ranked second (after Kardzhali District) in 2013 with the highest share of criminal cases heard by the District Court and closed in the first 3 months (98% compared to the country's average of 88.4%) and it also ranked second (after Vratsa District) in lowest share of pending cases (3.1% compared to the country's average of 8.5%). It should be noted that judges' workloads have traditionally been lower in the district compared to Bulgaria. 6.6 cases per judge, per month, were processed by Ruse District Court in 2013, and the country average was 8.3 cases per judge, per month.

Environment ●●●

Emissions of carbon dioxide have traditionally been lower in Ruse District than Bulgaria's average, and they have decreased for the past two years in line with the national trends. The volume of household waste collected per capita of serviced population also remained higher in 2013. The relative share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (67.7%) continued to be lower than national figures (74.7%) in 2013. Simultaneously, newly-built waste water treatment plants have increased the share of the population with access to public sewerage systems connected to waste water treatment plants in recent years and it is now higher than the country average. In 2012 expenditure on environmental protection soared from 20 m BGN in 2011 to more than 50 m BGN, mainly due to the construction of a new waste water treatment plant in Ruse City. In 2013 it dropped to 41 m BGN, which removed the district from the country average rate, relative to the population.

Culture ●●●●

Cultural life is well developed in the district. Regarding visits to cinemas and libraries, relative to the population, higher average rates were again reported in 2014, compared to the country average. In terms of the number of visits to theatres, Ruse District continued to keep its second rank (following the capital city) in 2014, featuring 569.3 visits per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 319 per 1,000 people. The district has lagged only in visits to museums. 358 visits per 1,000 people of the population were registered in 2014, while the national average was 662 visits per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Ruse

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,299	6,515	8,022	8,442	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,418	3,655	4,071	4,416	4,504	4,553
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	6,112	6,354	6,783	7,155	7,589	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	17.0	18.5	17.0	16.9	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	53.4	51.3	51.0	51.1	50.5	48.3
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	50.5	47.9	45.1	44.5	44.2	43.1
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	5.4	6.8	11.6	12.9	12.5	10.8
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	46	47	47	47	47	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,810	1,403	1,647	1,813	1,907	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,378	1,465	1,428	1,493	1,630	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	25.2	34.8	43.2	51.4	57.6	64.6
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	30.6	23.9	26.0	29.0	30.2
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	8.8	10.2	10.2	10.2	10.2	10.2

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−6.0	−6.5	−8.1	−8.1	−8.0	−8.5
Net migration rate (‰)	−2.4	−3.5	0.8	−1.4	0.2	−0.7
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	19.3	20.4	22.0	22.1	23.6	23.6
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.2
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	4.5	3.6	3.7	6.0	4.6	5.6
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.4	86.0	89.4	88.2	86.6	87.1
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	148.6	139.2	152.4	164.0	185.5	162.7
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	86.3	92.2	88.6	88.6	100.4	85.2
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	4.2	3.2	4.4	3.9	3.1	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	79.9	77.5	86.2	218.2	178.4	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	0.0	0.0	63.7	63.9	64.2	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	139.4	1097.1	753.5	759.9	769.4
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	384.9	389.3	474.1	444.5	514.7	569.3

Shumen District

▶ Population (2014)	177,493
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,389.7
▶ Number of settlements	152
▶ Share of urban population (%)	62.4

Map labels: KAOLINOVO · Venets · Nikola Kozlevo · Hitrino · NOVI PAZAR · SHUMEN · KASPICHAN · VELIKI PRESLAV · SMYADOVO · Varbitsa

Overview

Shumen District was severely impacted by the crisis in 2009. GDP per capita exceeded its pre-crisis level in 2011, while the nominal economic growth surged in 2011 and 2012, surpassing the national average. Incomes and salaries have remained relatively low. Shumen ranks third in Bulgaria among the highest unemployment districts, but this situation has been partly offset by employment nearing the country averages. The district still fails to attract considerable foreign investment and part of the reason could be the low quality of infrastructure, the poor development of e-services and the lack of transparency in the local administration.

Population ageing is commensurate with the national average. The University of Shumen has continued to attract students, but the figures for university graduates among the population show that most leave the district after graduating. The relatively small number of crimes against property registered in the district is probably the reason for the relatively quick ruling on criminal cases. The district reported improvement in the field of culture.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Scale: Weak · Unsatisfactory · Average · Good · Very good

- Overall: Weak
- Income and Living Conditions: Average
- Labor Market: Average
- Investment: Weak
- Infrastructure: Unsatisfactory
- Taxes and Fees: Average
- Administration: Weak

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Scale: Weak · Unsatisfactory · Average · Good · Very good

- Overall: Average
- Demography: Average
- Education: Average
- Healthcare: Average
- Security and Justice: Average
- Environment: Average
- Culture: Average
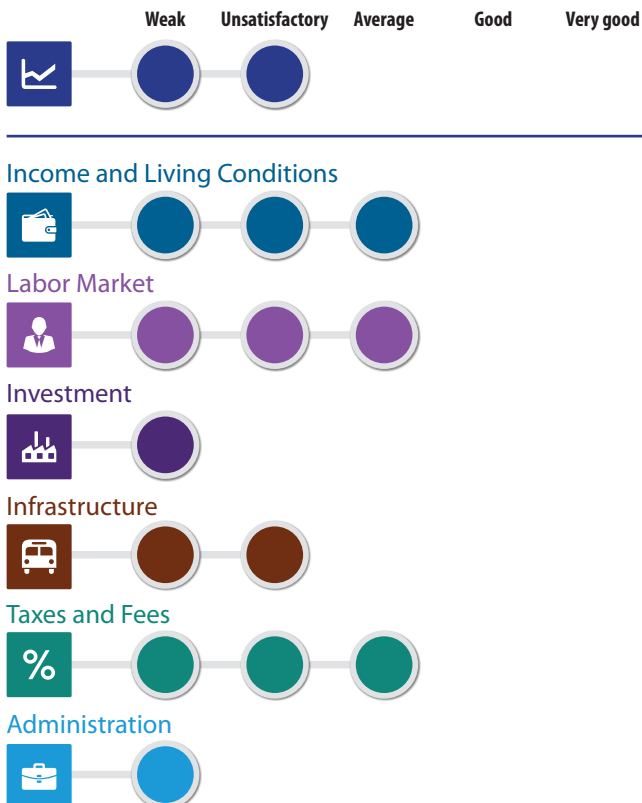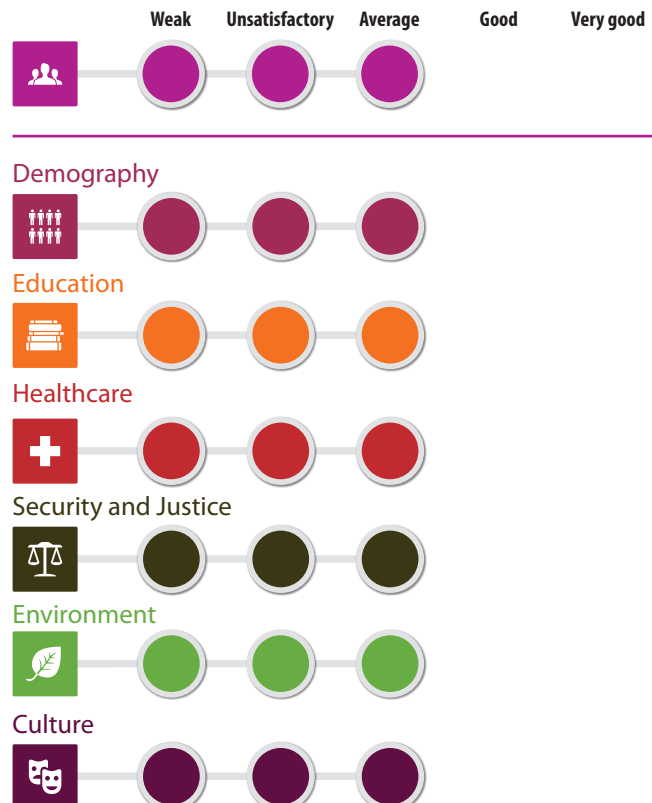
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ● ●

Income and Living Conditions ● ● ●

Notwithstanding the acceleration of economic growth in 2011 and 2012, GDP per capita has remained considerably lower than the country average. In line with the lower aggregate production per capita, incomes and salaries of the district's residents have also been lower than their national counterparts. The average annual income per household member was 4,387 BGN in Shumen District in 2014 compared to the country average of 4,813 BGN, and the annual gross salary was 7,405 BGN compared to 9,301 BGN for Bulgaria.

More than half the population lived in material deprivation in 2012, thus ranking the district eighth in Bulgaria concerning this indicator. The share of the population living in households with low work intensity is also higher than the country average.

Labour Market ● ● ●

Shumen District had the third highest unemployment rate in Bulgaria in 2014 after the districts of Silistra and Vidin – 21.1% compared to the country average of 11.4%. Yet, Shumen District is characterized by considerably higher economic activity, unlike the other two districts (59.8% compared to the country average of 54.1%). Employment is close to the country average rates, while high unemployment in Silistra and Vidin has been accompanied by low employment. Moreover, Shumen District reached the highest employment rate for the past 15 years in 2014.

Shumen had the fifth highest demographic replacement rate in 2014 (67.6% compared to the country average of 61.9%), which demonstrates that a relatively high number of young people (aged 15–19) is going to join the labour market, compared to those who will leave it (60–64).

Investment ●

Shumen is one of the districts with the lowest number of non-financial companies relative to the population and the lowest volume of domestic and foreign investment, also relative to the population. Although FDIs per capita had increased following the severe slump during the crisis, they remained five times lower in 2013 than the country average.

EU funds under operational programmes amounting to almost 100 m BGN were paid to the municipalities in Shumen District as of 31 January 2015, which was commensurate with the national indicator, in proportion to the population. The municipalities of Novi Pazar and Veliki Preslav have utilised most funds (1,584 BGN per capita, 1,127 BGN per capita respectively), and the municipalities of Kaolinovo and Vrabnitsa have drawn down least funds. It should be noted that no municipality in Shumen District has utilised less than 100 BGN per capita under operational programmes.

Infrastructure ● ●

The density of the road and railway networks is higher than the country averages, but the quality of roads remains relatively low. 35.1% of roads were in good condition in 2014, a slight deterioration in comparison with 2013, and lower by 5 pp than the country average.

The share of households with internet access was lower than the national average in 2014 (48.2% compared to 57%), and so was the share of people who had used the Internet in the past 12 months (51% compared to 59%).

Taxes and Fees ● ● ●

Most local taxes and fees in the municipalities of Shumen District are commensurate with the national averages. The annual license tax for retailers is much lower – the average rate in 2015 is about 9 BGN per sq. m, while the country average is 13 BGN per sq. m (it reaches 20 BGN per sq. m in some municipalities located on the Black Sea coast and the capital city). This difference is mainly due to the municipalities of Nikola Kozlevo and Varbitsa, which sustain some of the lowest rates in 2015 – 3 BGN per sq. m. The annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities is relatively low in 2015.

Administration ●

Shumen District, along with Vidin District, has the lowest development of local government e-services in Bulgaria. One-stop shop services are also below the country average and have not improved in recent years.

The share of territory included in cadastral maps is slightly higher than the country average of 18.1% – 19.8%, without change since 2010.

Shumen District is among the five districts with the lowest Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. The municipalities of Varbitsa and Venets got the lowest grade in this respect and the municipality with the highest grade, Veliki Preslav, did not exceed the country average.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ● ●

Demography ● ● ●

The ageing of Shumen District's population has followed the common national trend. The ratios of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–15 and to the number of people of working age are slightly more favourable compared to the country averages. The rate of natural increase and the net migration rate deteriorated in 2014; the first one reached –6.3‰, and the second one switched from positive to negative value. The district was one of the few with a positive net inflow of migrants from other districts in 2012 and 2013, but it reported a negative net migration rate of 0.1‰ in 2014.

The share of urban population is smaller than the country average (62% compared to the country average of 73%), and the data on population density, relative to the territory of settlements, rank Shumen District among the top five districts with lowest population density.

Education ● ● ●

The University of Shumen predetermines the good performance of the district in number of students in proportion to the population. 7,388 students were enrolled in 2014, or 42 students per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 38 per 1,000 people. The share of people with tertiary education increased to about one fifth of the population in 2014 but remained below the country average, meaning that a considerable part of students abandons the district following the completion of their education.

The school enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) is above the national average but has continually dropped in recent years, following the nationwide trend. Students from Shumen District have performed worse at state matriculation exams than their peers from the other districts.

Healthcare ● ● ●

Although the number of general practitioners, compared to the district's population, equals the country average, there is a serious insufficiency of certain health professionals. For instance, one specialist in Cardiology treats 10,400 people in Shumen District, while the country average is 5,900 people. The number of beds in multi-profile hospitals for active treatment in the district is relatively small, 3 beds per 1,000 people, compared to the national average of approximately 5 beds per 1,000 people. These figures correspond to the relatively small number of cases of hospitalisation in 2014 – 151.7 per 1,000 people in Shumen District, compared to the country average of 175 per 1,000 people.

Shumen is also one of the districts with the highest infant mortality rate – it ranks fourth after Sliven, Haskovo and Ruse.

Security and Justice ● ● ●

A relatively high number of crimes against the person were registered in Shumen District in 2014 – 6.5 per 10,000 people. Simultaneously, the number of registered crimes against property has remained relatively low and Shumen was one of the five districts with the lowest number of such crimes in 2014 (in proportion to the population).

The workload of judges trying criminal cases is lower than the country average – 7.3 cases per judge per month in Shumen District, compared to the country average of 8.3, which presumably brings about relatively quick ruling on cases. 93% of criminal cases were closed in the first 3 months in 2013 (88% for Bulgaria) and the share of pending cases was 6.5% compared to the country average of 8.5%.

Environment ● ● ●

The concentration of harmful emissions in Shumen District was 10 times lower than the country average. While emissions of carbon dioxide were 29 t/sq. km in the district in 2013, the country average was 294 t/sq. km.

In spite of the high grade for the clean air, the district's performance in this category was not very good in 2013, because of the small number of people with access to public sewerage systems connected to waste water treatment plants (44.8% compared to the country average of 56.4%), as well as the small number of people living in settlements with public sewerage systems (59.5% compared to the nationwide figure of 74.7%). It is expected that the Integrated Water Cycle of Shumen City project will be completed in 2015, improving the water supply and sewerage services in the district.

Culture ● ● ●

A new cinema was opened in Shumen City in 2014 after several years without a movie theatre, which resulted in 24,000 visits last year. The number of visits to theatres also increased in 2014, though their average number in proportion to the population has remained below the country average.

There were more visits to museums and libraries in Shumen District than the national average. Moreover, with 668 visits per 1,000 people in 2014 (compared to 518 for Bulgaria), Shumen District had the fourth highest number of visits to libraries, after Veliko Tarnovo (1,557), Sofia (Capital City) (1,198) and Sliven (706).

Key Indicators for the District of Shumen

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,584	5,642	6,499	6,865	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,932	3,208	3,427	3,944	4,333	4,387
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,803	6,214	6,499	7,068	7,405	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	26.3	21.0	23.5	18.0	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	54.1	56.4	59.5	59.9	59.4	59.8
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	41.6	40.2	43.5	44.0	44.0	47.2
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	23.1	28.8	26.8	26.6	26.0	21.1
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	37	38	36	37	37	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	942	786	1,069	1,429	1,333	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	491	459	506	590	612	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	34.7	25.2	33.7	44.7	49.8	48.2
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	30.1	18.9	19.0	36.3	35.1
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	15.5	19.8	19.8	19.8	19.8	19.8

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−3.0	−4.6	−4.8	−5.7	−4.6	−6.3
Net migration rate (‰)	−4.1	−5.2	−1.0	0.4	0.4	−0.1
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	18.7	18.8	20.4	20.7	21.3	24.2
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.7	4.0	4.3	4.0	4.0	4.1
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	9.5	9.7	7.6	8.9	8.1	8.9
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.1	84.7	89.6	88.4	87.5	88.1
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	126.1	116.7	124.2	132.8	147.7	151.7
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	63.7	68.1	73.9	60.8	65.4	48.1
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	6.0	4.2	4.7	5.4	6.5	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	118.2	148.0	157.5	188.1	218.2	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	44.6	44.8	44.8	44.8	44.8	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	14.2	12.7	12.3	0.0	0.0	135.2
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	102.1	93.2	149.3	175.7	165.6	245.2

Silistra District

▶ Population (2014)	115,354
▶ Area (sq. km)	2,846.3
▶ Number of settlements	118
▶ Share of urban population (%)	44.8

Overview

Silistra became the district with the lowest GDP per capita as the crisis began, a fact accompanied by extremely low incomes and salaries. Employment remained limited, and unemployment was the highest in Bulgaria in 2014. Silistra is the country's most unattractive district in terms of foreign direct investments, although local taxes and fees are lower than the country averages. The district's municipalities do not offer e-services, excluding Sitovo Municipality, and the transparency rating of the local administration is relatively low. The district's demographic situation is less favourable than the national average. In education, results are not good: a high share of dropouts from the educational system, relatively poor results at state matriculation exams and a particularly small share of people with university degrees living in the district. In healthcare, Silistra ranks among the districts with the acutest insufficiency of physicians. The number of registered crimes against the person and property has continued to be among the lowest in Bulgaria. Silistra has performed worse than the other districts in the categories evaluating the environment and cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
(overall)	●	●			
Income and Living Conditions	●	●	●		
Labor Market		●			
Investment		●			
Infrastructure	●	●	●		
Taxes and Fees	●	●	●	●	
Administration	●	●			

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
(overall)	●				
Demography	●	●			
Education		●			
Healthcare	●				
Security and Justice	●	●	●	●	
Culture	●				
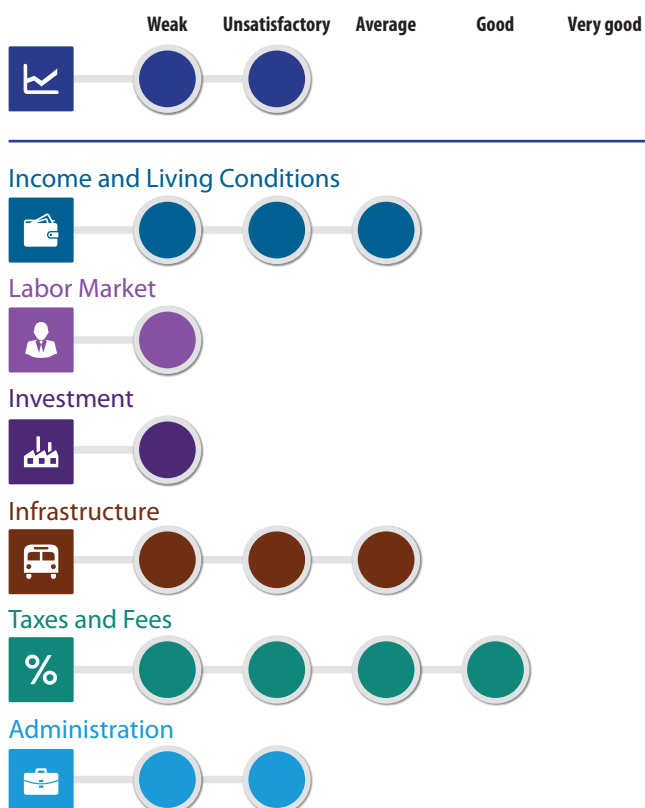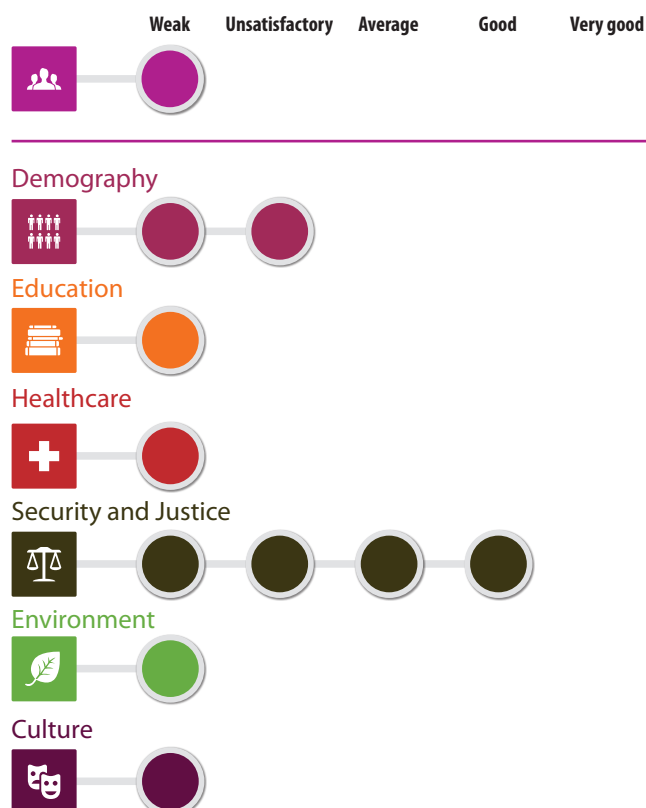
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●

Prior to the crisis Silistra was the district with the third lowest GDP per capita after Sliven and Yambol. The district has lagged behind in GDP growth since 2009 and, excluding 2011, had the lowest GDP per capita till 2012. GDP per capita was 5,206 BGN in 2012, half the national average of 10,958 BGN. The income per household member in the district was also the lowest in 2014 and salaries in Silistra were among the lowest in the country.

Data on living conditions is consistent with the country average levels. The share of the population living in households with low work intensity is below the country average, but the reason for that could be the district's ageing population.

Labour Market ●

The economic activity of the population aged 15+ increased in the district after the slump at the beginning of the crisis (2009 and 2010), but it has traditionally remained below the country averages. The economic activity rate in the district reached 49.5% in 2014 compared to the national average of 54.1%. At the same time, unemployment has been on the increase since 2009, and Silistra District had the highest unemployment rate in 2014, 22.4%, double the country average of 11.4%.

Silistra District has the second lowest employment rate (after Lovech), 38.4% in 2014 compared to 48% for Bulgaria. Nonetheless, some growth was reported in 2014, relative to 2013 when employment reached its 10-year bottom of 37.1%, and that growth could mark the beginning of a sustainable recovery of employment in the district.

Investment ●

A total of 4,000 non-financial companies operated in Silistra District in 2013. Relative to the district's population, this accounts for 33 companies per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 52 companies per 1,000 people. That low business activity goes hand in hand with very few domestic and foreign investments in the district. Expenditure on the acquisition of FTAs was 1,511 BGN per capita in 2013, despite its increase after the slump at the beginning of the crisis, compared to the country average of 2,490 BGN per capita. The district has also ranked last since 2009 in FDIs that reached an aggregate of 33 m BGN as at the end of 2013, or 0.1% of all FDIs in Bulgaria. Relative to the population, FDIs were 290.2 euros per capita in 2013 compared to the national average of 3,230.9 euros per capita.

The utilisation of EU funds has been consistent with the general trends – 509.5 BGN per capita were paid as of 31 January 2015 in the municipalities of Silistra District, compared to the country average of 564.9 BGN per capita. Glavinitsa Municipality has drawn down most funds (971.5 BGN per capita), and Alfatar Municipality has utilised least – 9.3 BGN per capita.

Infrastructure ●●●

The district's location in the periphery of the country accounts for the lower railway network density. Road network density is consistent with the national average. As in 2013, the quality of roads was better than the country average in 2014. 46.7% of roads were in good condition in 2014 compared to the country average of 40.5%.

Households' access to the Internet is commensurate with the country average, but its use has continued to be less intensive compared to the other districts. 51.9% of the district's residents had used the Internet for the past year in 2014 compared to the country average of 59.2%.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●

Local taxes and fees are generally lower in Silistra District than the country averages, and some of them have even been lowered further in the past four years. The annual license tax for retailers, which is lower by more than one third in the district's municipalities compared to the country average, differs most from the average levels. The immovable property tax and the local tax on the sale of immovable property are lower by about 5–10%.

Administration ●●

The territory included in the cadastral map is smaller than the country average. 14.2% of the district's territory was included in the cadastral map in 2014 compared to the country average of 18.1%, and no progress has been reported since 2010.

No municipalities in the district offer e-services, except Sitovo Municipality and one-stop shop services are less developed compared to most districts.

The 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies, provided by the AIP Foundation, is 44.5 points out of 88.4, in comparison with 54.5 points for Bulgaria. The administration of Alfatar Municipality has been the most transparent for two years in a row with 71 points. Dulovo Municipality's result is the lowest in 2015 (28.3 points).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●

Demography ● ●

The district's demographic situation is less favourable than it is nationwide. The age dependency ratios continued to surge, and the ratio of the population 65+ to the population of working age was 34% in 2014, while the ratio of the population 65+ to the population 0-15 was 163%. For the country as a whole, these ratios were 30%, and 144%, respectively. The rate of natural increase has remained quite high but negative in 2014: –8.4‰ compared to the country average of –5.7‰. The district has featured a negative net migration rate, which shows that more people leave to settle in other districts than come to settle in Silistra District.

Silistra has the lowest share of urban population after Kardzhali District. 44.8% of the district's population lived in towns and cities in 2014 compared to the national average of 73.1%. In 2014 Silistra also had the lowest population density as well.

Education ●

Enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) was similar to the national average in 2014 as well, but the number of dropouts from primary and secondary education was high. 3% of students dropped out of school in 2013 compared to the country average of 2.4%. Simultaneously, grades at state matriculation exams were relatively low. 9% of students failed at the state matriculation exam in 2015 compared to the nationwide figure of 6.4%. A surge in the number of unsatisfactory grades was noted this year in several districts, including Silistra. This could be due to the stricter control measures during the exams. The average grade from the state matriculation exam has also slumped – from 4.2 in 2014 to 3.9 in 2015 compared to the 2015 country average of 4.2.

Silistra was among the districts with the lowest share of university graduates till 2013, but it hit the bottom in 2014 with 14.4% of the population with university degrees compared to the country average of 27%.

Healthcare ●

Silistra District has had an insufficient number of both general practitioners and key health professionals for the past 15 years. 1,955 people per general practitioner were treated in 2014 compared to the country average of 1,596 people. The problem regarding cardiologists is most severe. Silistra was one of the three districts in 2014 (together with Razgrad and Targovisthe) with the biggest lack of such specialists; there were more than 23,000 people per cardiologist compared to the country average of 5,765.

There were 3.9 beds in multi-profile hospitals for active treatment per 1,000 people in 2014, compared to the country average of 4.8 beds per 1,000 people. At the same time, the number of hospitalisations, relative to the population, was higher by 17% – 204.8 per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 175.4 per 1,000 people.

Security and Justice ● ● ● ●

The crime rate is more limited compared to Bulgaria's average. 3.5 crimes against the person per 10,000 people, compared to 5.9 crimes per 10,000 people for the country, and 40.1 crimes against property per 10,000 people, compared to the country average of 89 per 10,000 people, were registered in 2014.

The workload of penal judges at Silistra District Court has traditionally been less intensive than the country average, due to the small size of the population and the low business activity. Nonetheless, the share of cases closed in the first 3 months has been lower than the country average – 86% compared to 88.4%. This implies a certain degree of ineffectiveness of legal proceedings.

Environment ●

Silistra is among the districts with the lowest level of carbon dioxide emissions. The emissions in the district have not exceeded 24 t/sq. km for the past four years, while the country average is about 300–400 t/sq. km.

The share of the population living in settlements with access to public sewerage systems, connected to waste water treatment plants, has continued to be particularly low. The construction of such a plant started at the end of 2014, and Silistra is expected to report a better indicator in this regard in the following years. Expenditure on environmental protection, which placed Silistra at the bottom in 2013 with 70.9 BGN per capita compared to the country average of 288.9 BGN per capita, will probably increase.

Culture ●

Not having had a single cinema for several years, Silistra saw the opening of a cinema again in August 2014; the number of reported visits for the five months of that year was 69.4 per 1,000 people. Regarding the rest of indicators, the district also reported lower results in 2014 compared to the country average. 188 visits per 1,000 people were made to theatres (319 for Bulgaria), 180 visits were made to museums (662 for Bulgaria) and 351 visits were made to libraries (compared to the country average of 518).

Key Indicators for the District of Silistra

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	4,748	4,638	5,433	5,206	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,494	2,629	2,589	3,337	3,249	3,289
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,349	5,771	6,059	6,390	6,880	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	20.7	29.0	19.5	17.9	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	47.2	44.4	44.9	47.0	47.2	49.5
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	43.6	39.3	39.3	39.4	37.1	38.4
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	7.6	11.4	12.5	16.0	21.3	22.4
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	32	32	32	33	33	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	991	737	1,259	1,442	1,511	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	76	117	65	111	290	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	20.7	20.8	40.0	56.5	37.6	60.2
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	24.8	40.0	39.0	44.8	46.7
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	12.5	14.2	14.2	14.2	14.2	14.2

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−5.3	−6.8	−7.7	−8.1	−6.8	−8.4
Net migration rate (‰)	−6.1	−7.7	−2.0	−2.4	−3.2	−3.4
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	14.2	13.1	15.4	15.8	15.1	14.4
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.1	4.1	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.2
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	6.5	6.7	4.5	5.1	4.0	3.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	84.9	82.7	86.8	85.6	84.9	86.0
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	169.6	145.9	165.0	181.5	202.4	204.8
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	53.1	56.1	50.0	46.9	44.1	40.1
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	11.5	6.3	7.7	7.8	6.4	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	121.0	85.1	86.3	90.7	70.9	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.6	0.6	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	18.1	10.4	0.0	0.0	69.4
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	180.1	167.0	131.2	145.1	191.9	188.0

Sliven District

▶ Population (2014)	193,284
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,544.1
▶ Number of settlements	120
▶ Share of urban population (%)	66.1

KOTEL

TVARDITSA

SLIVEN

NOVA ZAGORA

Overview

The district is among the most underdeveloped in Bulgaria, and the share of the poor is high. The labour market has been depressed, especially after the beginning of the economic crisis. The district has the most favourable rates of demographic replacement. The expenditure on acquiring FTAs, relative to the population, was half the country average in 2013, and the utilisation of EU funds by the district's municipalities is not on the list of good examples. Sliven District has continued to rank first in terms of the quality of roads. The local business environment features relatively low taxes and fees in the municipalities of the district; it has

been evaluated highly for the transparency of the local administration.

Sliven District ranks second after the capital city with the lowest absolute value of the negative natural increase (−2.5‰). The age dependency ratios also demonstrate a more favourable situation relative to most districts. The district simultaneously has one of the lowest enrolment rates (grades 5th through 8th) and the highest share of dropouts from primary and secondary education. The shortage of physicians constitutes an essential problem in healthcare. The workload of penal judges in the District Court remains higher than the country average.
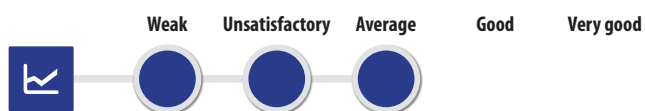
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	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 growth has considerably lagged behind the national average. While the nominal GDP per capita in Sliven District was 2,454 BGN in 2000 or 71% of the country average, it constituted 53% of the national average GDP per capita in 2012, despite rising to 5,800 BGN. Thus Sliven has the fourth lowest GDP among all districts. Incomes and salaries in the district are also lower than the country average. Though the annual gross salary has grown with time, it has lagged behind the country average; it was 6,999 BGN in 2013 compared to the country average of 9,301 BGN. The district has a relatively high poverty level. 47.4% of the district's population lived in material deprivation in 2012 (compared to the country average of 43%), and 31.6% of the population lived below the district's poverty line (compared to 21% for Bulgaria).

👤 Labour Market ●●●

The population's economic activity has decreased for the past two years and Sliven District dropped to 21st place in 2014 (48.4% compared to the country average of 54.1%) from having the sixth highest economic activity in 2008 (54.7% compared to the country's average of 53.8%). The employment rate has fluctuated within close limits in recent years, but it has stayed much lower than the country average. Employment was 41.8% in the district in 2014 compared to Bulgaria's average of 48%. Unemployment started to decrease after its top level of 19.4% in 2012, but it was higher than the country average – 13.6% compared to the country average of 11.4% in 2014. The district also had the most favourable rates of demographic replacement in 2014. The ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 77.8% (61.9% for Bulgaria), which means that there are 77.8 young people about to join the labour market per 100 people who are going to leave it.

🏭 Investment ●

Cumulative FDIs shrank five times in 2012 compared to 2009, but the reason was that one of the biggest investors in the district, Edoardo Miroglio, became a Bulgarian citizen. FDIs were 503.9 euros per capita as at the end of 2013 compared to the national average of 3,230.9 euros per capita. Expenditure on the acquisition of FTAs, relative to the population, was half the country average in 2013 – 1,132 BGN per capita compared to the national average of 2,490 BGN per capita. Business activity has also diminished since 2009 – 35 non-financial companies per 1,000 people operated in 2013 compared to the country average of 52. In terms of the utilisation of EU funds, the district's municipalities have not performed

well. The funds the municipalities were paid as of 31 January 2015 totalled 67 m BGN, or 1.7% of all EU funds drawn down by the municipalities as beneficiaries under the operational programmes. Relative to the population, the municipalities utilised 349.2 BGN per capita compared to the country average of 564.9 BGN per capita. Sliven Municipality has drawn down most funds (478.5 BGN per capita, which is also below the country's average), and Tvarditsa Municipality has utilised least funds – 21.2 BGN per capita.

🚍 Infrastructure ●●●●

Sliven District ranked first in road quality for a successive year. 80.3% of roads were in good condition in 2014 compared to the country average of 40.5%. The density of the road and railway networks is consistent with the national average. The share of households with Internet access increased in 2014 but still lags behind the country average – 49.8% compared to the national figure of 56.7%. The share of people (aged 16 to 74) who have used the Internet for the past 12 months was 52.9% for the district, compared to the country average of 59.2%.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●

The district's municipalities have generally maintained lower local taxes and charges in comparison with the country average. The annual waste collection charge for legal entities differed particularly in 2015 – 3.23‰ on average for the municipalities in Sliven District, compared to the national average of 7.59‰. This charge is 1.20‰ in Sliven Municipality, the lowest among all district centres. The rates of the annual license tax for retailers and the immovable property tax for legal entities are considerably lower. From all the five taxes and fees considered only the tax on the sale of immovable property which the municipalities of Sliven and Kotel keep at relatively high rates is higher than the country average.

💼 Administration ●●

The evaluation of the district for the level of development of local government e-services has been consistent with the country average, but the rendering of one-stop services lagged in 2014 as before. The Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation rated the local administration as the second most transparent after that in the capital city. The result for Sliven District is 64.4 points in 2015 (out of 88.4) compared to the country average of 54.5 points. Sliven Municipality is the most transparent, featuring 70.3 points, and Tvarditsa Municipality is the least transparent (36.5 points).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●

Demography ●●●●

There was not one district with a positive natural increase in Bulgaria in 2014, but Sliven District ranked second after the capital city for the lowest negative natural increase: −2.5‰ compared to the country average of −5.7‰. The district had the most favourable age dependency ratio (65+ to 0–14) – 102.4% compared to the country average of 144.3% among all districts in 2014.

The share of urban population is lower in the district than the country average: 66.1% of the population lived in towns and cities in 2014 compared to 73.1% in Bulgaria. Sliven District ranks second after Sofia (Capital City) with the highest population density notwithstanding the relatively high share of rural population.

Education ●

The district had one of the lowest enrolment rates (grades 5th through 8th) in 2013 and simultaneously the highest share of dropouts from primary and secondary education (4.6% compared to the country average of 2.4%). The share of repeaters has also been considerably higher than the country average – 2.3% compared to 1.4% in 2014. Following a slump in the number of teachers in 2012, Sliven has continued to be among the districts with the smallest number of teachers in primary and secondary education, relative to students. For the first time in years Yambol displaced Sliven from the last position in 2014. The average grade at the state matriculation exam equalled the national average in 2015, and the share of failed students fell below the country average – 5.9% compared to the country average of 6.4%.

The share of people of working age with university degrees increased in 2014 but it remained lower than the country average – 22.5% compared to 27% for Bulgaria.

Healthcare ●●

Considerable insufficiency of physicians has been noted in the district. The number of both general practitioners and internists dropped in 2014 compared to 2013. The share of health insured persons continued to be relatively small in 2014 – 85.6% compared to the country average of 87.1%. The number of beds in hospitals was 4.4 beds per 1,000 people in 2014 compared to the country average of 4.8 beds per 1,000 people. Simultaneously, the number of hospitalised people dropped in 2014, after unusually high figures in 2012 and 2013. A possible explanation for this surge in the cases of hospitalisation throughout the entire country in 2012 and 2013 is the increased budget of the NHIF in 2011, and the deficit in 2013 that caused the lower real budget in 2014.

Sliven continued to be the district with the highest infant mortality rate – double the country average in 2014.

Security and Justice ●●

Registered crimes against property continued to drop for the second year in a row and were below the country average in 2014 – 74.5 per 10,000 people compared to the country average of 89 per 10,000 people. At the same time, crimes against the person remained above the country average and even increased in 2014.

The courts' workload has remained high in the district. There were 9.4 cases per month, per judge, ruled by the District Court in 2013, compared to 8.3 cases per month, per judge, for Bulgaria. The share of pending cases has also been higher than the country average.

Environment ●●

Expenditure on environmental protection relative to the population continued to be about three times lower in the district than it was in the country – 102.6 BGN per capita compared to the national average of 288.9 BGN per capita in 2013.

Emissions of carbon dioxide on the territory of Sliven District have been preserved at lower levels compared to the average emissions in Bulgaria.

The district has not progressed in the construction of public sewerage systems, and 65.2% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems in 2013 compared to the country average of 74.7%. Simultaneously, waste water treatment plants are available for 57.6% of the population compared to the national figure of 56.4%.

Culture ●●●

For the indicators regarding culture, Sliven District reported, for a successive year, a relatively high number of visits to libraries in 2014 compared to the country average – 706 people per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 518 per 1,000 people. The calculated indicator for visits to theatres is also above the country average – 350.1 per 1,000 people of the district's population.

Visits to cinemas dropped to 93.1 per 1,000 people in 2014, following a surge in 2013, in comparison with the country average of 706.

Key Indicators for the District of Sliven

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	4,820	4,838	5,436	5,800	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,432	3,907	3,605	3,226	3,014	4,017
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,649	6,000	6,191	6,589	6,999	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	26.0	23.6	32.0	31.6	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	53.4	51.6	52.4	51.8	49.0	48.4
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	45.4	43.0	43.7	41.8	41.3	41.8
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	15.0	16.7	16.6	19.4	15.9	13.6
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	37	36	35	35	35	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,467	916	1,491	1,636	1,132	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	2,715	2,303	2,561	548	504	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	16.3	27.5	36.5	37.0	41.1	49.8
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	82.5	82.0	82.0	79.3	80.3
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	18.0	23.0	23.0	23.0	23.0	23.0

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−0.6	−2.6	−2.0	−2.3	−2.2	−2.5
Net migration rate (‰)	−7.6	−11.8	−2.8	−4.5	−5.1	−4.1
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	17.2	18.4	18.7	18.7	20.5	22.5
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.2	4.2	4.2
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	7.3	5.4	4.4	6.5	7.0	9.0
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.0	84.7	86.1	85.0	84.4	85.6
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	148.3	140.1	148.2	218.4	220.6	153.8
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	80.6	99.7	98.9	100.6	86.9	74.5
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	7.1	9.6	7.2	7.0	9.3	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	55.1	54.0	97.1	118.6	102.6	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	57.3	57.3	57.7	57.6	57.6	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	0.0	35.7	20.3	151.6	93.1
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	203.3	227.0	273.0	309.5	357.3	350.1

Smolyan District

▶ Population (2014)	115,101
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,192.8
▶ Number of settlements	242
▶ Share of urban population (%)	55.3

Overview

The development of Smolyan District's economy has faced serious challenges throughout the years following the crisis. The district still has high levels of economic activity, but unemployment is among the highest in Bulgaria. There are insufficient domestic and foreign direct investments, the utilisation of EU funds has lagged, and poor infrastructure has remained a negative factor in economic development. Local taxes in the municipalities of Smolyan District are relatively low, but local administrations could perform much better. Highly negative demographic trends have been formed in the district as a result of the high negative natural increase of the population and the number of people who have left. Good school education is a key factor of development: the district has the best performance at state matriculation exams after the capital city and also an increase in the number of university graduates relative to the population aged 25–64 years. With regard to crime rates, Smolyan is the safest district in Bulgaria, and there have almost been no crimes against the person. Cultural activities have developed for the past year.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Income and Living Conditions

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Labor Market

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Investment

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●				

Infrastructure

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Taxes and Fees

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Administration

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Demography

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Education

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Healthcare

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	●

Security and Justice

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	●

Environment

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Culture

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●				

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ● ●

Income and Living Conditions ● ● ●

The gross domestic product per capita reached 7,230 BGN in 2012 in Smolyan District. The economy recovered more slowly in 2011 and 2012 compared to the country's average rates. Incomes in the district are among the top ones in Bulgaria, which is due to the higher economic activity, higher incomes from self-employment and the relatively high compensations and benefits. The slow recovery, however, impacts the level of salaries the growth of which lagged behind the country averages from 2010 to 2013.

The relative share of people living below the district's poverty line has fluctuated a lot in time; it was 14.1% in 2012, or considerably lower than the country average. The main reason for that was the drop of the median income in 2012, which automatically entails a lower poverty line in the district. On the other hand, the share of people living in material deprivation is high: it reached 45.9% in 2012.

Labour Market ● ●

Smolyan is the district with the highest economic activity of the population – 59.6% in 2014. This demonstrates both relatively high employment and high unemployment. Employment in Smolyan District has recovered in recent years and it reached 48% in 2014. Unemployment decreased from 2012 to 2014 but remained among the highest in Bulgaria – 19.4% in 2014. The demographic trends intensify the labour market's problems. The demographic replacement rate was the lowest in the country in 2014 – 46.6%, which means that there were approximately 47 people aged 15–19 who were to join the workforce, per 100 people aged 60–64 who were to leave it.

Investment ●

No serious inflow of FDIs has been noted in Smolyan District, which poses one of the biggest challenges before the district's long-term growth. Expenditure on acquiring FTAs increased in 2013 and reached 141 m BG but remained lower than the country average when weighed against the population. The utilisation of EU funds by the district's municipalities has lagged behind the country's average rates, and the total amount paid reached almost 53 m BGN as of 31 January 2015. Relative to the population, the municipalities of Smolyan, Rudozem and Borino are the best examples of EU fund-sutilisation – 28 m BGN, 5 m BGN, and 1,7 m BGN respectively.

Infrastructure ● ● ●

The challenges before the transport infrastructure of Smolyan District are dominated by the predominant mountainous topography of its territory. No highways or major roads cross the district and there is no rail transport either. Nonetheless, the road network density has been close to the national average and the condition of roads improved in 2013 and 2014 – almost half of them were in good condition in 2014 (49.5%).

Households' connectivity to the Internet has improved: 55% of households had Internet access in 2014. Internet use, however, continued to lag behind the country average and a little over half the people aged 16–74 had used the Internet for the past 12 months in 2014 (52.3%).

Taxes and Fees ● ● ● ●

Local taxes in the municipalities of Smolyan District are relatively low compared to the country average. Chepelare Municipality features higher tax rates: the immovable property tax for companies and the tax on the sale of immovable property are 3‰, and 3% respectively, in 2015. These taxes are 1.9‰ for immovable property and 2.5% for selling immovable property, respectively, in the district centre of Smolyan. The municipalities of Madan and Zlatograd have the lowest rates of these taxes.

There are several municipalities in Smolyan District that impose high annual waste collection charges – Nedelino (18‰), Devin (16‰), Madan (13‰) and Zlatograd (11‰). The rate of these charges is lowest in Smolyan Municipality, 3‰, and it is 6 to 7‰ in the municipalities of Chepelare, Dospat and Rudozem.

Administration ● ●

The municipalities of Smolyan District have lagged in e-services and the provision of one-stop services. In the rendering of e-services, the municipalities of Banite and Smolyan performed well in 2015, while the municipalities of Banite and Chepelare did well in provision of one-stop services. The territories included in cadastral maps constituted almost one third of the district's territory (32.1%) in 2014, with the territories of the municipalities of Devin and Smolyan almost fully included.

Smolyan District has lagged in the Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. The best-performing municipalities are Devin and Zlatograd in 2015, and the municipalities of Borino, Dospat, Nedelino and Rudozem received the lowest grades.

⚏ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

⚏ Demography ●●

Smolyan is the second smallest district in Bulgaria – its population was 115,101 in 2014. Slightly over 55% of the population lives in towns. The number of citizens has considerably shrunk throughout the years. The reasons for this were the steady negative trends in both the natural increase and the net migration rate of the population. The rate of natural increase has deteriorated in recent years (–7,8‰ in 2014), and the negative net migration is more clearly expressed than in the other districts in Bulgaria (–11.6‰ in 2014).

The age dependency ratios have aggravated in recent years. There were almost 1.8 times more people aged 65+ than children (aged up to 14) in 2014; they were also about 30% of the working population (aged 15–64). When related to the country average, these ratios demonstrate that the demographic challenges are mainly in the birthrate. The lowest birthrate in Bulgaria is registered in this district – 6.4‰.

⚏ Education ●●●●

Smolyan District ranks first in the country in the number of teachers in proportion to the population – 11 students per teacher were registered in 2014. The net enrolment rate of the population (grades 5th through 8th) has remained among the highest in Bulgaria (82.4% in 2014). Both the share of repeaters (0.3% in 2014) and the share of dropouts from primary and secondary education (0.4% in 2013) have been among the lowest in Bulgaria. Smolyan District was only outranked by the capital city in 2015 in performance at the state matriculation exams: its average grade was 4.37, and barely 2.5% of students failed.

Smolyan District faces more challenges with the number of university graduates. Even though the relative share of people with tertiary education (aged 26–64) has increased in recent years (to 21% in 2014), it still lags behind the best-performing districts in Bulgaria. The number of students fell to 1,857 in 2014.

⚏ Healthcare ●●●●●

The number of beds in multi-profile hospitals in Smolyan District increased in the past two years to reach 531 beds in 2014. The main reason for that is the hospital in the town of Devin which was closed in 2011 and reopened at the beginning of 2014. The cases of hospitalisation in multi-profile hospitals have also increased in the past two years reaching 24,000 people (2014), or about 212 per 1,000 people of the population.

Health-insured persons were 91.6% of the district's population in 2014, one of the top values in Bulgaria. The number of general practitioners, in proportion to the population, is relatively good, but the district has problems with the number of health professionals. The infant mortality rate is among the lowest in Bulgaria – 2.7‰ in 2014.

⚏ Security and Justice ●●●●●

According to official data, Smolyan District is the most secure district in Bulgaria – 2 crimes against the personality and 29 crimes against property per 10,000 people were registered in 2014. This is almost three times better than the country average. It could also be concluded from the data that courts work relatively efficiently and quickly. The share of criminal cases heard by the District Court and closed in the first 3 months was 96% in 2013. The share of pending criminal cases was low as at the end of 2013 – 6.7% compared to the country's average of 8.5%. The judges' workload is also relatively low in Smolyan District – 6.2 cases per judge, per month, compared to the national average of 8.3 cases per judge, per month.

⚏ Environment ●●●

Emissions of carbon dioxide are at their lowest level in Smolyan District in comparison with the country (barely 4.8 t/sq. km in 2013). There are practically no enterprises on the territory of the district that pollute the air. Household waste collected per capita of serviced population has increased, but it remained below the country average in 2013 – 386 kg per capita.

Slightly more than 69% of the district's population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems in 2013, and almost 40% had access to public sewerage systems, connected to waste water treatment plants. Although the municipality of Smolyan commissioned a new waste water treatment plant financed by EU funds in 2010, the district has lagged in terms of waste water treatment. The expenditure on environmental protection has been relatively low and amounted to 16 m BGN in 2013.

⚏ Culture ●

Although the indicators for cultural activities in Smolyan District have been rather poor, some positive trends have been noted for the past year. Visits to museums totalled 42,000 in 2014, not much in comparison with the country, but a district record. In the past few years, a modern cinema was opened and the new Rhodopi Dramatic Theatre was established. Visits to theatres were almost 8,000 in 2014, and visits to the cinema reached 16,000. Visits to libraries have dropped for the past year to just over 23,000.

Key Indicators for the District of Smolyan

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,501	6,500	7,160	7,230	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,776	3,890	4,180	4,242	4,590	5,315
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,867	6,134	6,122	6,516	6,800	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	12.8	21.3	25.5	14.1	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	57.8	54.0	54.1	56.3	58.7	59.6
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	49.2	43.7	40.6	44.0	46.8	48.0
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	14.9	19.2	25.0	21.9	20.3	19.4
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	47	47	43	44	44	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	2,454	860	1,081	1,010	1,202	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	904	569	599	631	661	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	23.7	32.3	31.3	45.3	45.2	55.4
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	43.8	42.7	41.0	45.3	49.5
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	16.4	26.5	32.1	32.1	32.1	32.1

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−3.7	−4.3	−6.4	−6.7	−6.6	−7.8
Net migration rate (‰)	−10.2	−13.5	−5.4	−7.3	−14.7	−11.6
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	18.0	17.2	16.6	18.2	20.0	21.0
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.4
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	4.7	6.0	5.4	5.6	3.9	3.4
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	93.0	91.4	91.2	90.4	90.0	91.6
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	205.7	193.0	183.2	180.1	196.6	211.9
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	28.2	32.9	26.8	23.6	27.8	29.3
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	9.8	7.9	11.1	6.5	6.7	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	135.5	103.2	115.0	121.0	138.1	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	13.4	39.0	39.0	39.1	39.3	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	139.0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	87.9	51.9	1.2	0.0	0.0	69.2

Sofia District (Capital City)

▶ Population (2014)	1313,095
▶ Area (sq. km)	1,348.9
▶ Number of settlements	38
▶ Share of urban population (%)	95.5

NOVI ISKAR
BUHOVO
BANKYA
SOFIA

Overview

Sofia (Capital City) is the most advanced district in Bulgaria economically and socially. Households' incomes are high, and salaries account for a considerable part of them. The labour market has been recovering, but employment has not reached its pre-crisis levels yet. Investment activities remain the most intensive in the country, but the 2011 outflow of foreign investments has yet to be compensated. Despite the high level of administrative services and infrastructural coherence in the district the business environment has suffered from the high rates of local taxes and fees.

The district's demographic development has followed the nationwide trends, but immigration from other districts has helped to offset these trends. Sofia (Capital City) is the most significant educational and cultural centre and one of the leading districts in healthcare. The major Bulgarian universities are located here, the share of people with university degrees is the highest, and the performance of students at state matriculation exams has been among the best in Bulgaria. The judicial system is overly busy, and crime rates are high. The environment is polluted, but investment in its preservation is enormous.

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	●	●	●	●	●
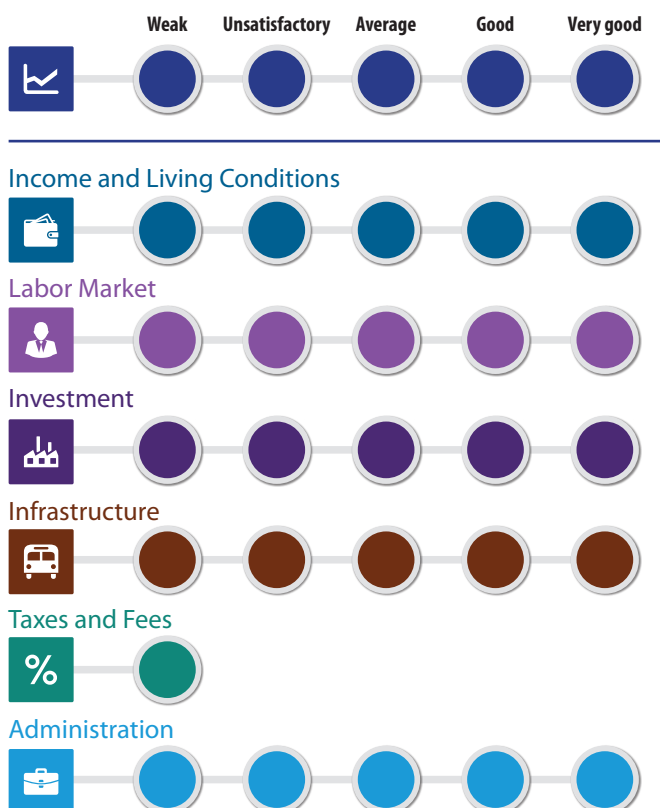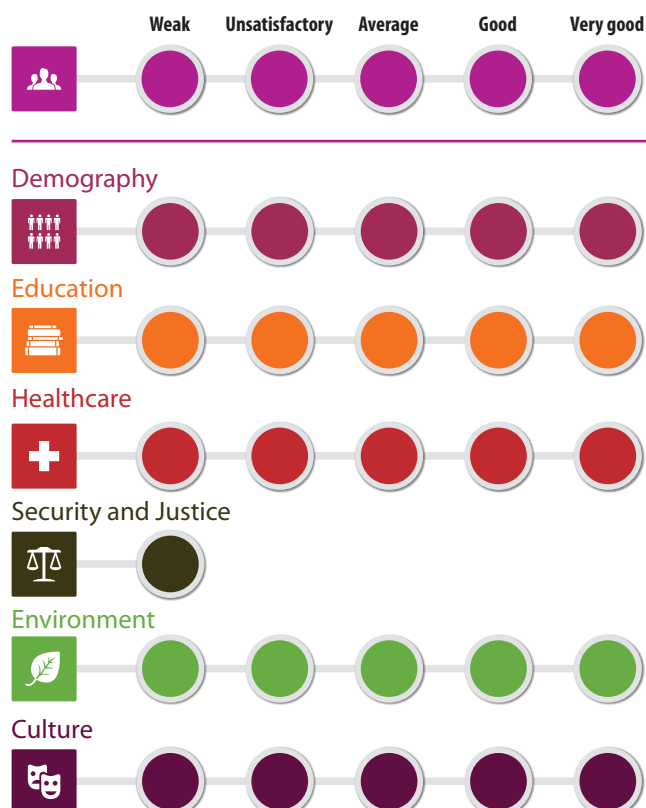
📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

💼 Income and Living Conditions ●●●●●

Sofia (Capital City) is the district with the highest incomes and the best living conditions. GDP per capita reached 24,023 BGN in 2012, which was 2.2 times higher than the country average. The average annual gross salary amounted to 12,851 BGN in the capital city in 2014, 38% over the country average (9,301 BGN). Salaries accounted for about 65% of households' incomes in 2014, which was the result of the high employment rate in the district.

The share of people living in households with low economic activity – 4.8%, is low compared to the country average of 11.6%. The share of those living in material deprivation is about 30% compared to the national average of 43%. 22% of the population live below the capital city's poverty line compared to the country's average of 21%. The poverty line, however, amounted to 5,376 BGN in 2012, a value higher by 57% than the country average of 3,431 BGN.

👤 Labour Market ●●●●●

Sofia (Capital City) is the district with the highest employment rate of the population 15+ (57.3%) and the lowest unemployment rate (6.3%) in 2014, compared to the country averages of 48%, and 11.4% respectively. The recovery of the district's labour market has considerably outperformed its neighbouring districts, thus causing an increasing share of the population living in the South-western Region to work in the capital city. The capital city is the only district where the economic activity of the population exceeds 60%.

There were 62.6 individuals aged 15–19 in 2014 about to join the labour market per 100 individuals aged 60–64, about to abandon it – a ratio near the country average of 61.9%.

🏭 Investment ●●●●●

In proportion to the population, investment in FTAs was 2.2 times higher than the country average in 2013, and there were 2.8 times more cumulative FDIs at the end of the year.

Nonetheless, investment activity is still far below pre-crisis levels. Investment in FTAs continued to decrease in 2013 as well: expenditure totalling 7.14 billion BGN was the lowest since 2005. FDIs registered two successive years of growth and their cumulative amount reached 12 billion euros at the end of 2013. The faster growth of other districts (mostly Burgas and Plovdiv) lowered the share of FDIs in Sofia in the national total. At the end of 2009 61.4% of FDIs were concentrated in the capital city; this share was 51.7% at the end of 2013.

The only field in which the capital city has lagged is the utilisation of funds under the EU operational programmes.

515 m BGN, utilised as at 31 January 2015, equalled 392 BGN per capita in comparison with the country average of 565 BGN per capita.

🚍 Infrastructure ●●●●●

Because of the specificity of Bulgaria's territorial and administrative division there are no roads from the national road network on the territory of the capital city. These roads start from the district's border and provide access to the Hemus, Trakia and Struma highways. The railway network density is 13.6 km per 100 sq. km compared to the country average of 3.6 km per 100 sq. km. The Sofia metro was connected to Sofia Airport in 2014, and the construction of its third line M3 started in 2015.

Information technology is widespread in the district. Almost 70% of households had Internet access in 2014 compared to the country average of 56.7%. The share of people (aged 16 to 74) who used the Internet in 2014 was 77.7% compared to the country average of 59.2%.

% Taxes and Fees ●

The levels of the main local taxes and fees are higher than the country average. In 2015 the biggest gaps are in the annual license tax for retailers (20 BGN per sq. m for the best location, compared to the country average of 12.7 BGN per sq. m) and the annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities (10‰ compared to the country average of 7.6‰).

The tax on the sale of immovable property (2.50‰ compared to 2.46‰), the vehicle tax (1.38 BGN per kW compared to 1.35 BGN per kW for vehicles and cars with a power output from 74 to 100 kW), and also the immovable property taxes for legal entities (1.88‰ compared to 1.79‰) are higher than the national average. No changes were noted in the levels of these taxes from 2012 to 2015.

💼 Administration ●●●●●

The district's territory included in the cadastral map was 95.8% in 2014 compared to the country average of barely 18.1%. The AIP Foundation has evaluated Sofia Municipality as the most transparent for the second successive year. It got 75.1 points out of 88.4 points, compared to the country average of 54.5 points, in the 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies.

The development level of e-services in the capital city is the highest in Bulgaria, alongside Varna District, and one-stop shop services are provided with the help of a monitoring system for results and solving possible problems.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

Demography ●●●●●

Sofia (Capital City) is the only district where the net migration rate of the population has been constantly positive since 2000. This means that every year a greater number of people settle in the district than the number of those leaving it. Migration processes have provided an ongoing growth of the population size which reached 1.3 m people in 2014. An increasing part of Bulgaria's population lives in the capital city – 18.2% in 2014 compared to 15% in 2000.

The population age structure is also better than the country average. Sofia was the only district in 2014 with four people of working age per person aged 65+.

Education ●●●●●

Sofia has achieved the best result in the field of education for yet another year. School-leavers from the capital city attained the best results in 2015 in comparison with their peers at state matriculation exams. The share of failed students is 1.8% compared to the country average of 6.4%, and the average grade reached Very Good (4.62) compared to the country average of Good (4.21). The relative share of repeaters is half the country average (0.7% compared to 1.4%); the relative share of dropouts from primary and secondary education is three times lower than the country average of 2.4%. The net enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) was 74.8% in 2014 compared to 83.7% in 2007, in comparison with the country average of 78.6%.

In 2014 the number of university students dropped for the first time since 2007 – from 111,900 to 108,700. Nevertheless, the capital city remained the leading university centre in Bulgaria, and the share of university graduates in the population aged 25–64 is over 48% compared to the country average of 27%.

Healthcare ●●●●●

Many health institutions of national importance are located on the territory of the capital city. The population morbidity rate (measured via the cases of hospitalisation in multi-profile hospitals for active treatment) has returned to its traditional levels after a certain growth in 2012 and 2013; it is close to, but lower than the country average.

A surge in the number of beds was noted in multi-profile hospitals in recent years – from 4,817 in 2010 to 6,166 in 2014. Owing to these trends, the number of beds in the district has gradually equalled the country average of 4.8 beds per 1,000 people of the population. While 18.2% of the national population lives in the capital city only 27.3% of all cardiologists work there.

Security and Justice ●

The actual workload of penal judges at Sofia City Court is almost twice as big as the country average. Every one of them tried 15 cases per month on average in 2013, compared to the country average of 8.3 cases per month. This is one of the main reasons for the relatively slow proceedings – 81% of cases were closed in the first 3 months in 2013 compared to the national figure of 88.4%. The share of pending criminal cases was also high – 10.6% in 2013 and only the districts of Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil reported a higher share.

Despite the registered drop in 2014, the crime rate has remained high in the capital city. In proportion to the local population, crimes against the person are higher by 18%, and those against the property by 63% than the country averages of 5,9 per 10,000 people and 89 per 10,000 people respectively.

Environment ●●●●●

The high rate of connectivity to public sewerage systems and waste water treatment plants constitutes the main reason for the high grade which the capital city received in the Environment category. 96.3% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems in 2014, with 96.1% connected to waste water treatment plants. The district's annual expenditure on environmental protection has traditionally been among the highest in Bulgaria. More than 535 m BGN were invested in 2013 for this purpose, which amounted to 25% of the total expenditure in Bulgaria.

The emissions of carbon dioxide gradually diminished from 1,239 t/sq. km in 2011 to 1,073 t/sq. km in 2013. Nonetheless, they have been considerably higher than the country's average of 294 t/sq. km.

Culture ●●●●●

Sofia (Capital City) was the only district with 2 visits to cinemas per capita in 2014 compared to the country average of 0.7. 2.6 m visits to local cinemas were registered in 2014.

In proportion to the population size, the capital city had the highest number of visits to theatres in 2014 – 852,000, or 648.8 visits per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 319 visits per 1,000 people. There were 1.47 m visits to libraries, Veliko Tarnovo District being the only one to outrank the capital city on this account.

There were 922,000 visits to museums in 2014. The National Gallery – Square 500 was opened in May 2015, managing to attract more than 50,000 visitors in less than four months.

Key Indicators for the District of Sofia (Capital City)

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	21,759	22,890	24,008	24,023	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,951	4,795	5,438	6,403	7,441	6,890
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	9,913	10,547	11,249	12,059	12,851	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	15.9	18.6	18.4	22.0	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	63.1	61.5	59.9	60.1	61.1	61.1
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	60.7	57.4	56.2	55.7	56.1	57.3
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	3.9	6.6	6.1	7.3	8.2	6.3
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	84	85	78	79	81	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	7,971	6,064	6,554	6,143	5,468	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	10,051	9,937	8,953	9,009	9,195	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	53.0	57.1	67.0	66.2	70.9	69.3
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	3.2	30.2	60.7	95.8	95.8	95.8

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	0.2	0.0	−1.1	−1.4	−1.5	−1.2
Net migration rate (‰)	2.0	7.6	4.8	5.4	7.1	6.5
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	45.6	44.8	42.7	42.9	45.8	48.6
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.3	4.6	4.6
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	2.7	1.7	1.6	3.7	2.2	1.9
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	93.4	90.9	87.5	86.8	85.2	85.9
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	129.4	131.0	139.9	238.1	223.6	152.5
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	185.3	169.4	148.5	130.5	150.3	145.4
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	14.6	11.6	12.1	12.8	10.6	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	215.7	241.7	235.5	372.7	410.2	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	93.5	93.5	95.5	95.4	96.1	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	1,752.7	2,084.6	2,098.6	1,812.9	1,999.5	2,060.8
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	587.6	603.1	614.0	600.4	641.0	648.8

Sofia District
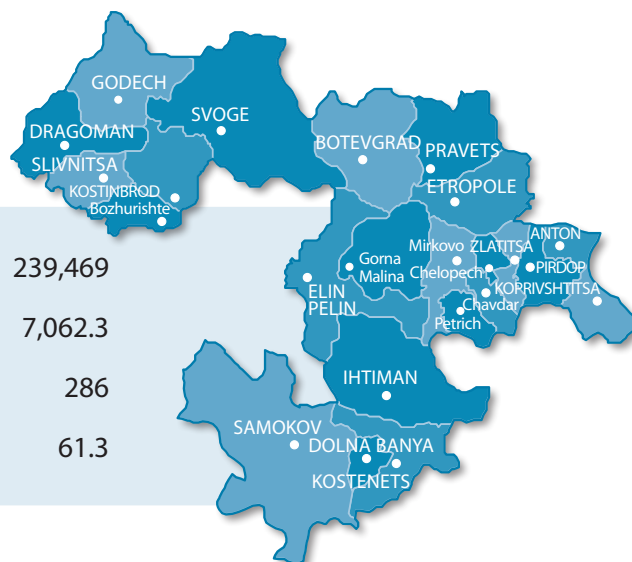
▶ Population (2014)	239,469
▶ Area (sq. km)	7,062.3
▶ Number of settlements	286
▶ Share of urban population (%)	61.3

Overview

Investment activities have been relatively low in the district after the crisis, but there were considerable cumulative investments in previous years while EU funds have been well utilised. Notwithstanding the growth of salaries, an increasingly smaller part of the population of working age receives salary income, the ongoing stagnation in employment being the main reason. The district's levels of taxes and fees have neared the country average, but the development of administrative services has lagged.

The social conditions in the district are affected by its proximity to the capital city. A negative migration balance has formed for the past three years in comparison with the positive net migration rate of the population in some previous years. The quality of school education has deteriorated for the past two years, and the development of culture has lagged with the exception of museums. Crime rates have gone up in the district since 2010. Notwithstanding the relatively clean environment, higher morbidity rates of the population and a relatively high infant mortality rate characterise the district.

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
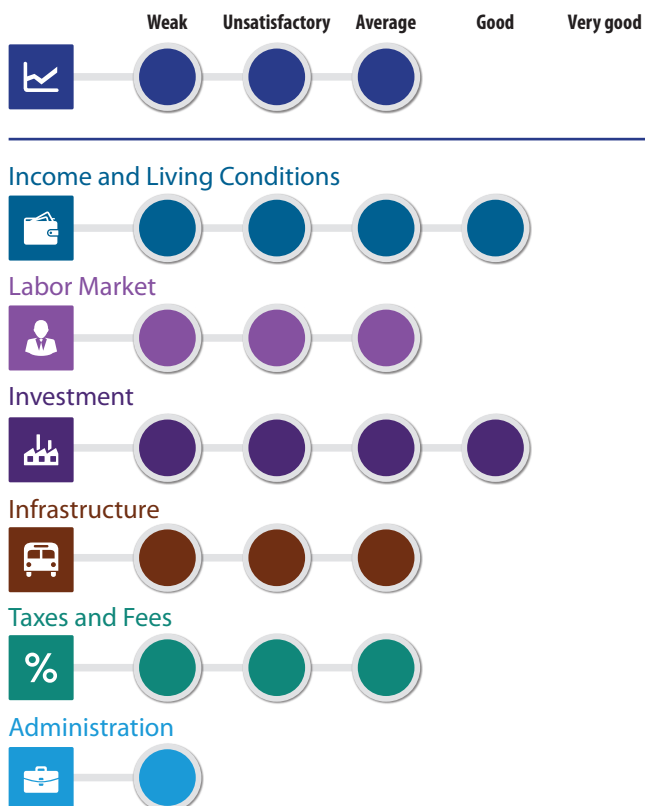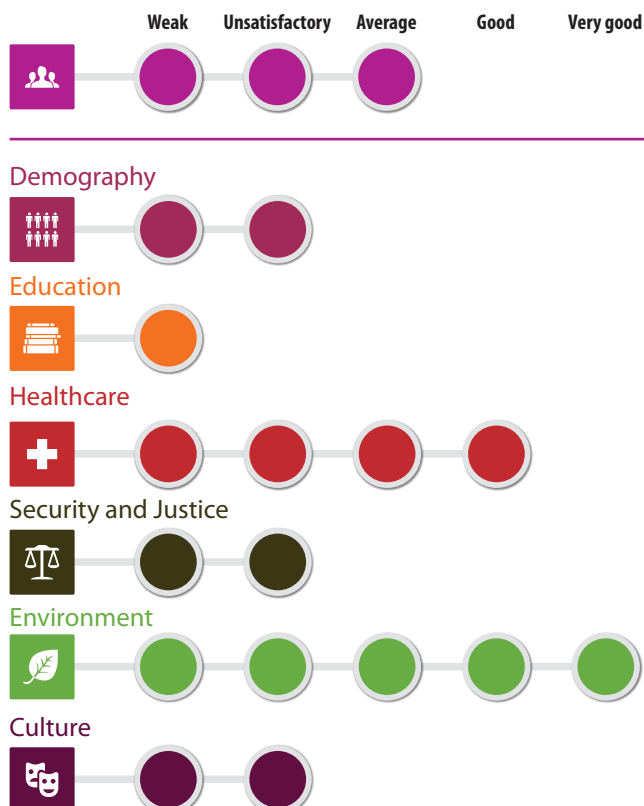
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●

Sofia District's GDP per capita reached 12,136 BGN in 2012 compared to the country average of 10,958 BGN. This has been Bulgaria's second highest rate since 2011; the district has thus outranked Varna and Stara Zagora. A steady salary growth has been noted; however, it has had limited influence on the living conditions in the district due to the ongoing employment stagnation. Notwithstanding the growth of salaries, an increasingly smaller share of the population has received salary income. As a result of that, average annual incomes remain among the lowest in Bulgaria. Lower levels were observed only in Kardzhali, Pazardzhik, Silistra and Targovishte in 2014.

The share of the population living in households with low work intensity, and that of the population living in material deprivation have been higher than the country average since 2010.

Labour Market ●●●

From 2008 to 2011 the employment dynamics of Sofia District followed the overall national development trends but later some differences have become notable. Employment of the population aged 15+ slightly decreased in the district but remained about 46%, while the national average reached 48% in 2015. Unemployment slowly went up, and the district's unemployment rate (12.7%) exceeded the national average of 11.4% in 2014 for the first time since 2000. The increase in unemployment has been caused by both the ongoing employment shrinkage and the increase in the economic activity of the population. The latter reached a record high of 52.3% in the district in 2014 though still lower than the country average (54.1%).

In 2014, there were 63 people aged 15–19, who were to join the labour market, per 100 individuals aged 60–64, who were to leave it, compared to the country average of 62.

Investment ●●●●

The volume of FDIs (cumulative) fell from 1.32 to 1.26 billion euros from 2010 to 2013 showing a net outflow of foreign investments. Nevertheless, Sofia District kept its second rank as at the end of 2012 in terms of attracted FDIs per capita after Sofia (Capital City), while it ranked third as at the end of 2013 after investment activity improved in Burgas District. Expenditure on acquiring FTAs dropped in 2013 to its lowest level since 2005.

The municipalities in the district managed to offset part of this slump by utilising EU funds. The two municipalities with most absorbed funds under the EU operational programmes by 31 January 2015 are located in Sofia District. These are the municipalities of Kostinbrod – 83.4 m BGN, or 4,829 BGN per capita – and Hisaria – 35.9 m BGN, or 4,496 BGN per capita. Ihtiman, Svoge and Zlatitsa are among the municipalities where the utilisation of funds has lagged.

Infrastructure ●●●

Despite the vast territory of Sofia District, the density of the road and railway networks in the district is higher than the country average – 21.3 km per 100 sq. km compared to 17.7 km per 100 sq. km, and 4.2 km per 100 sq. km compared to 3.6 km per 100 sq. km respectively. Despite a slight improvement in 2014, the share of roads in good condition (31%) has remained considerably lower than the country average of 40.5%.

The population's Internet access stopped increasing in 2011; in the next couple of years there was even a certain drop. 45.9% of the district's households had Internet access in 2014, compared to the country average of 56.7%. The relative share of people to use the Internet was closer to the average in 2014 – 54.3% compared to the country average of 59.2%.

Taxes and Fees ●●●

The levels of both the annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities and the immovable property tax for legal entities are higher compared to the country averages. At the same time, their rates vary considerably between municipalities. For instance, the annual waste collection charge varies from 3‰ in Bozhurishte to 26‰ in Svoge.

Changes to the levels of taxes and fees are relatively rare despite the big number of municipalities in the district (a total of 22). In recent years the lowered annual license tax for retailers in Samokov Municipality in 2014 was the single more significant change: it slumped from 17 BGN per sq. m in 2013 to 10 BGN per sq. m. The lowered vehicle tax by 0.10 BGN per kW, in Kostenets Municipality was the only change in 2015.

Administration ●

Sofia is one of the five districts in Bulgaria where the quality of administrative services has been evaluated as poor. The ratings of municipalities vary from 15.2 points (Ihtiman) to 70.9 points (Chelopech) out of 88.4 points in the last edition of the Active Transparency Rating of the AIP Foundation. The average for the municipalities in the district is 35.8 points compared to the country average of 54.5 points.

The development of e-services and the provision of one-stop shop services lag considerably. The district's territory included in cadastral maps was 12.6% in 2014, compared to the country average of 18.1%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●

Although the age structure of the local population is less favourable than the country average, the process of ageing of Sofia District's population is slower compared to most districts.

One of the reasons is the fact that Sofia is one of the few districts in Bulgaria where the net migration rate of the population had positive values in some years. This happened from 2005 to 2007 and also from 2009 to 2011. The proximity to the capital city and employment opportunities could be a possible explanation for these processes.

Nonetheless, the number of the district's citizens dropped by 9.1% for the past ten years. 61.3% of the local population lived in towns and cities in 2014 compared to the country average of 73.1%.

Education ●

Data on school education in Sofia District (the school year 2014/2015), demonstrated the deepening of some negative trends in recent years. The average grade of school-leavers was lower than the country average in 2014, for the first time; it was Good (4.25) compared to Good (4.32). This difference increased in 2015 – Good (4.09) compared to Good (4.21). In addition, the share of failed students did not exceed 3% from 2008 to 2013 and was the lowest in Bulgaria in 2011 and 2012. This share already totalled 5% in 2014, and 10% in 2015, compared to the country averages of 4.8%, and 6.4% respectively.

A new drop was registered in 2014/2015 in the number of students in institutions of higher education. Sofia has remained one of the districts featuring the lowest share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education, 15.7%, compared to the country average of 27%.

Healthcare ●●●●

Most indicators concerning the state of healthcare in the district have neared the country's average levels. The number of doctors is, to some extent, insufficient in the district. In view of the proximity of most settlements in the district to the capital city, the negative effects of this insufficient number are potentially minor compared to other districts. Multi-profile hospitals had 1,199 beds in 2014, or 5 beds per 1,000 people, compared to the nationwide average of 4.8 beds.

The share of health-insured persons increased from 84.8 to 86.0% in 2014, which shows that the district is catching up with the country average. The infant mortality rate surged in the district to 10.6‰, in 2014, compared to the national average of 7.6‰.

Security and Justice ●●

Similarly to the other districts in the southwestern part of Bulgaria, Sofia District got a low grade in the field of security and justice.

Although the real workload of penal judges at the District Court is lower than the country average (6.9 cases per judge per month, compared to 8.3 cases per judge per month, in 2013), the share of criminal cases tried by the District Court, which had been closed in the first three months, was 83% in 2013, compared to the country average of 88.4%. The share of pending criminal cases was also higher than the country average in 2013 – 9.2% for the district in comparison with 8.5% for the country.

The number of registered crimes against the property was much lower than the country average prior to 2010. Crime rates surged in 2010 and 2011, then stabilised again, but at levels close to the country averages.

Environment ●●●●●

Emissions of carbon dioxide soared from 17.6 to 41.7 t/sq. km from 2010 to 2013. Despite this growth, they remained considerably lower than the country average of 293.9 t/sq. km. The expenditure on environmental protection amounted to 118.5 m BGN in 2013, which totalled 489.7 BGN per capita in proportion to the population, compared to the country's average of 288.9 BGN per capita.

Although 75% of the district's population lives in settlements with public sewerage systems, barely 29.3% are connected to waste water treatment plants. The national averages were 74.7%, and 56.4% respectively, in 2013.

Culture ●●

Cultural life is influenced by the proximity of Sofia District's settlements to the capital city. This district was the only one in 2014 featuring neither theatres, nor sufficiently big libraries participating in the annual monitoring of the NSI. Visits to local cinemas have crept up, but their number, in proportion to the population, was lower only in Haskovo, Razgrad, Targovishte and Vratsa. The five districts that have no cinema (Kardzhali, Lovech, Montana, Pazardzhik and Pernik) have not been considered at all.

The registered visits to the district's museums have surged in recent years. In proportion to the population, they totalled 2,092 visits per 1,000 people in 2014, featuring the second highest ratio in Bulgaria after Gabrovo.

Key Indicators for the District of Sofia

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,943	8,854	11,818	12,136	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,251	3,201	3,156	3,523	3,563	3,771
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	7,026	7,749	8,360	8,926	9,252	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	19.1	21.4	16.4	20.6	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	51.3	51.1	51.2	49.1	51.1	52.3
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	49.5	47.1	46.3	46.0	46.0	45.7
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	3.6	7.8	9.7	6.4	10.0	12.7
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	37	37	37	37	38	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	2,213	2,174	1,971	2,338	1,836	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	3,216	5,243	5,253	5,413	5,274	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	24.8	33.4	48.7	49.2	44.1	45.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	30.7	36.2	36.0	28.6	31.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	11.6	11.6	12.4	12.4	12.4	12.6

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−7.1	−8.0	−8.3	−8.5	−8.2	−9.1
Net migration rate (‰)	2.3	−2.1	0.1	−1.2	−1.6	−2.7
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	12.3	13.1	15.3	15.0	14.4	15.7
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.4	4.7	4.8	4.5	4.4	4.3
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	2.1	1.9	1.5	2.1	2.2	5.0
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.2	85.4	86.0	85.4	84.8	86.0
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	242.7	230.2	241.4	246.0	252.2	248.5
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	69.2	142.7	126.4	88.0	100.5	82.3
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	12.4	6.4	12.0	10.9	9.2	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	243.2	273.6	367.1	413.5	489.7	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	28.7	28.8	28.2	29.1	29.3	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	16.6	19.7	35.0	61.8	62.6
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Stara Zagora District

▶ Population (2014)	327,034
▶ Area (sq. km)	5,151.1
▶ Number of settlements	207
▶ Share of urban population (%)	72.0

Map showing districts: GURKOVO, PAVEL BANYA, MAGLIZH, NIKOLAEVO, KAZANLAK, STARA ZAGORA, Bratya Daskalovi, RADNEVO, CHIRPAN, Opan, GALABOVO

Overview

Stara Zagora's economy has traditionally been among the best-performing in Bulgaria. The average salary is high, but this has been caused by the concentration of employees in big enterprises throughout the district. Poverty has crept up, and income inequality is among the top in the country. Unemployment has increased in recent years. The district has attracted foreign direct investments successfully, but there are challenges, faced by municipalities, concerning the utilisation of EU funds. Local taxes and fees are relatively low, and administrative services are rendered at a relatively good level.

A positive net migration rate of the population has been observed in recent years in Stara Zagora District, but the demographic background has deteriorated nonetheless. The challenges before school education have intensified – the shares of dropouts and repeaters have increased as well as the number of failed students at state matriculation exams. The share of the population with tertiary education has increased. Stara Zagora has remained the district with the highest harmful emissions in Bulgaria, which impacts environmental quality. The district has become safer in recent years, and cultural activities have intensified.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
(Economic Development)	●	●	●		
Income and Living Conditions	●	●	●		
Labor Market	●	●	●		
Investment	●	●			
Infrastructure	●	●	●		
Taxes and Fees	●	●	●	●	
Administration	●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
(Social Development)	●	●	●		
Demography	●	●	●		
Education	●	●			
Healthcare	●	●	●	●	●
Security and Justice	●	●			
Environment	●	●			
Culture	●	●	●	●	
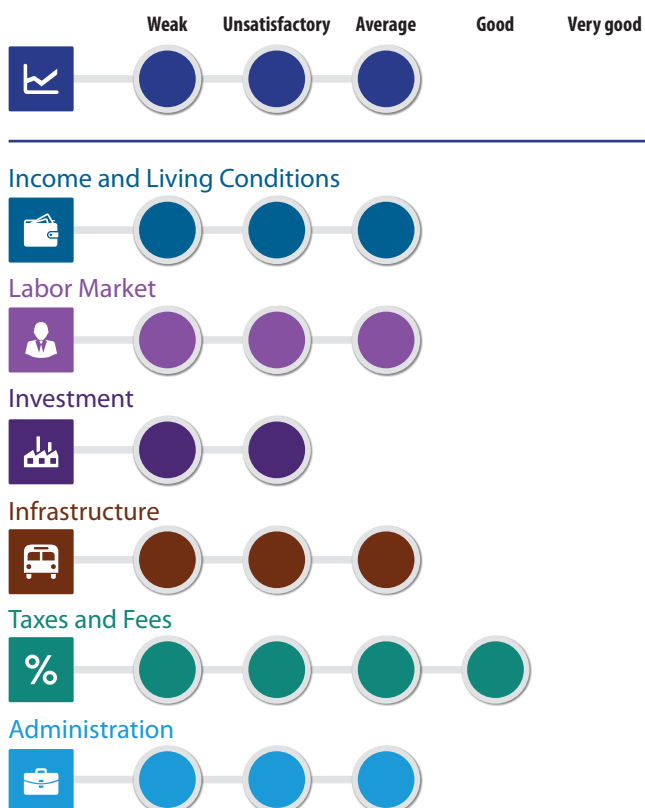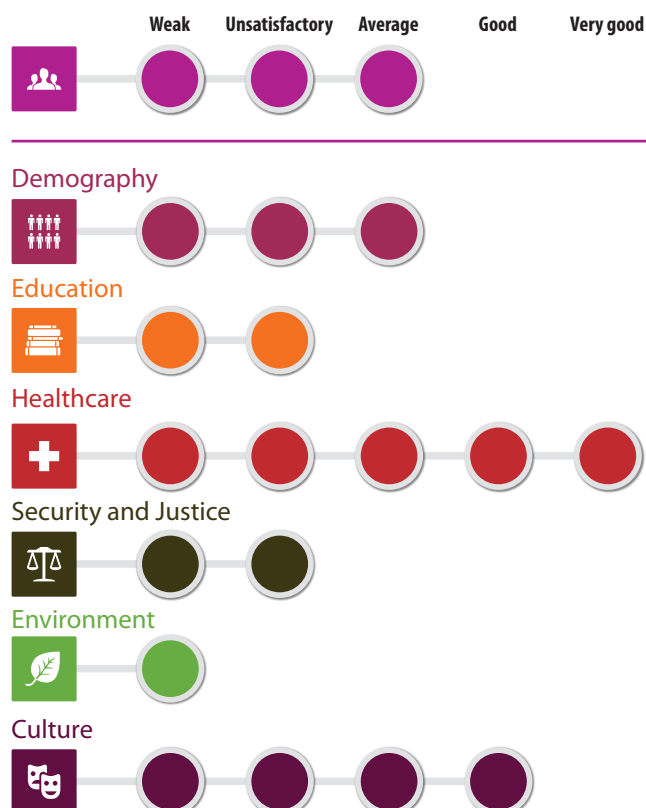
⌁ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●

👛 Income and Living Conditions ●●●

Stara Zagora District's GDP was 11,669 BGN in 2012, which made it the fourth richest district in Bulgaria. Industry has traditionally dominated the structure of the local economy. Incomes are relatively high, and pension incomes are among the top ones in Bulgaria. The average annual gross salary per employed person rose to reach 9,414 BGN in 2013, outranked solely by the capital city's.

54.3% of the population lived in material deprivation in 2012, i.e. faced difficulties in meeting their basic needs. The relative share of the poor compared to the district's poverty line increased in 2012 to 26.5%. In Stara Zagora income inequality has been among the most evident in Bulgaria and has increased, and the ratio of the incomes of the richest to the poorest 20% of households was 9 times in 2012.

👤 Labour Market ●●●

Some negative trends not characteristic of the country were observed on the Stara Zagora District's labour market in 2013 and 2014. The economic activity of the population aged 15+ sustained 50,1% in 2014, following its deterioration in 2013, while the employment rate even slightly shrank to 44.6%. Unemployment has not followed the general downward trend, characteristic of Bulgaria, either: it increased to 11% (2014).

The demographic replacement rate was 60.4% in 2014, which means that there were about 60 people aged 15–19, who were to join the workforce, per 100 people aged 60–64, who were to abandon it.

🏭 Investment ●●

Stara Zagora is among the districts with most attracted FDIs. The number of non-financial companies has remained relatively low, which implies high concentration of investment in several big enterprises. Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets has been far below its pre-crisis levels, dropping to 678 m BGN in 2013.

The municipalities in Stara Zagora District have continued to lag in the utilisation of EU funds under the operational programmes – the funds the municipalities were paid reached 129 m BGN as at 31 January 2015. The municipalities of Radnevo, Stara Zagora, Kazanlak and Chirpan have utilised the most EU funds in the district (12 m BGN, respectively 75 m BGN, 29 m BGN and 8 m BGN).

🚌 Infrastructure ●●●

The road network density of Stara Zagora District is not higher than the country's usual levels, but the the Trakia highway, connecting the capital with Burgas and the south Black Sea coast, passing through the territory of the district, is an important factor for the development of the region. The share of roads in good condition has diminished in recent years, reaching 53.7% in 2014, but it has still remained very high compared to the country average. The quality of the highway, on district territory, is mainly good. The railway network of the district is also a factor of development, and its density is high compared to the country average.

The relative share of households with Internet access slightly increased in 2014 to 53.7%, but use has been lower than the country average – 46.6% of people (aged 16–74) have used the Internet for the past 12 months.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●

The municipalities in Stara Zagora District impose relatively low immovable property taxes on companies; the same holds for taxes on the sale of immovable property. In 2015 the immovable property tax for companies is relatively low in the municipalities of Pavel Bania (1‰), Chirpan (1.1‰) and Gurkovo (1.2‰). This tax is not high in the district centre of Stara Zagora, either – 1.45‰. Most municipalities in the district impose a tax of 2% on the sale of property, 2.5% in the district centre.

Waste collection charges for legal entities in the municipalities of Kazanlak (2‰), Opan (3.5‰), Stara Zagora (3.5‰) and Pavel Bania (4‰) are among the lowest in Bulgaria in 2015. Radnevo Municipality features the highest annual waste collection charge in the district – 10‰.

💼 Administration ●●●

Several municipalities in Stara Zagora District have performed relatively well in e-services and one-stop shop services (as per data from 2015). E-services are well developed in the municipalities of Stara Zagora, Pavel Bania and Kazanlak, and one-stop services are well organised in the municipalities of Radnevo, Stara Zagora, Galabovo and Nikolaevo. The district's territory included in cadastral maps was 15% of the entire territory in 2014, with better coverage in the municipalities of Gurkovo, Kazanlak, Stara Zagora and Nikolaevo.

There are contrasts in the ways municipalities in Stara Zagora District perform in the 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. The best-performing municipalities in this rating are Stara Zagora and Radnevo.

♣ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

⊞ Demography ●●●

The population of Stara Zagora District totalled 327,034 in 2014, which ranked it fifth in Bulgaria. Over 70% of the district's population live in towns and cities. The drop in the population size has been caused by the negative natural increase (–7‰ in 2014). A positive net migration rate, despite being barely 0.5‰ in 2014, was observed in recent years (2012–2014); migration has been mainly from the neighbouring districts.

Age dependency ratios have followed the national negative trends. The population 65+ was almost 1.5 times higher than the number of children (0–14) and about one third of the working population (15–64) in 2014. The birthrate was 9.5‰ in 2014 – slightly higher than the country average.

⚖ Security and Justice ●●

Stara Zagora District has become slightly safer in recent years; crimes against property slumped from 2011 to 2014. 6.2 crimes against the person and 74.4 crimes against property were registered per 10,000 people in 2014. The data disclose insufficient effectiveness and rapidity of the court – the share of quickly closed cases has decreased, and that of pending cases in the District Court has increased. The share of criminal cases closed in the first 3 months was 85% in 2013 and the share of pending criminal cases was 9.5% as at the end of 2013 the country's average being 8.5%. Judges' workload diminished in recent years to reach 8.4 cases per judge per month in 2013.

▤ Education ●●

Both the number of students and the number of teachers slightly increased in 2013 and 2014 in Stara Zagora District, the number of teachers staying relatively low in proportion to students: 14.3 students per teacher in 2014. The net enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) remained relatively high: 80.8%. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education slightly increased to 2.5% (2013), and the relative share of repeaters was among the highest in Bulgaria in 2014: 2.2%. The grades from state matriculation exams have traditionally been about the country averages (4.19 in 2015), but the share of failed students increased to 5.8%.

There were more than 5,000 university students in Stara Zagora in 2014; Trakia University constitutes a factor for attracting and retaining young people in the district centre. The share of graduates in the workforce has increased – 21.8% of the population aged 25–64 were university graduates in 2014.

◪ Environment ●

Emissions of carbon dioxide considerably dropped in 2013 but have remained several times higher than in other districts in Bulgaria: 3,405 t/sq. km. The big pollutant factors are the enterprises in the energy sector and those in heavy industry. Household waste collected per capita of serviced population increased in 2013 reaching 432 kg per capita. The construction of a regional waste management system financed by EU funds started in Stara Zagora in 2014.

More than 70% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems in 2013, and 61.2% of it had access to public sewerage systems connected to waste water treatment plants. A waste water treatment plant financed with EU funds was commissioned in 2011 in Stara Zagora City, which seriously enhanced the district's indicators.

✚ Healthcare ●●●●●

The number of hospitals in Stara Zagora District as well as the number of beds increased for the past two years and the number of beds in multi-profile hospitals reached 1,544 in 2014. The cases of hospitalisation in multi-profile hospitals decreased in 2014: 146.2 per 1,000 people of the population, below the country average.

The district features a relatively sufficient number of general practitioners but lags in key health professionals. The share of health-insured persons has preserved good levels – 89% in 2014. Infant mortality rate has soared for the past two years and is already high – 9.7‰ in 2014.

㊎ Culture ●●●●

The indicators regarding cultural activities in Stara Zagora Distric have improved in recent years. Visits to theatres increased to reach 117,000 in 2014. Visits to cinemas also increased and are now about 210,000. The modern cinemas at the big shopping centres of Stara Zagora City are an important factor for this growth. Visits to museums have also increased to reach 372,000 in 2014. Visits to museums, weighed against the population, were almost double the country average. Visits to libraries have slightly dropped to 149,000.

Key Indicators for the District of Stara Zagora

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,478	9,781	10,459	11,699	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,713	3,886	4,184	4,382	5,037	4,957
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	7,602	8,080	8,512	9,117	9,414	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	24.2	26.0	24.0	26.5	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	50.6	50.9	51.8	52.2	50.0	50.1
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	48.6	47.5	48.5	48.5	44.8	44.6
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	3.9	6.7	6.3	7.1	10.6	11.0
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	43	43	43	44	44	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	3,431	2,522	1,936	2,946	2,062	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,209	1,643	1,691	2,024	2,437	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	26.6	31.7	40.4	53.4	52.3	53.7
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	60.4	59.3	59.0	53.4	53.7
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	7.7	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−4.5	−5.2	−5.5	−5.8	−5.8	−7.0
Net migration rate (‰)	−2.8	−4.9	−1.6	1.9	0.5	0.5
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	19.3	19.3	21.5	20.5	19.5	21.8
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.4	4.4	4.6	4.2	4.3	4.3
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	3.6	2.9	3.2	3.9	4.0	3.8
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.8	87.6	90.6	89.7	88.4	89.0
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	162.6	153.9	156.0	170.4	205.5	146.2
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	75.4	115.8	126.9	100.6	91.1	74.4
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.2	8.1	8.9	8.3	9.5	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	323.0	205.5	567.9	309.6	262.2	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	18.8	18.7	60.9	61.0	61.2	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	329.5	516.1	653.3	588.0	590.4	642.1
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	216.7	196.8	325.4	319.0	349.2	358.7

Targovishte District

▶ Population (2014)	117,069
▶ Area (sq. km)	2,558.5
▶ Number of settlements	199
▶ Share of urban population (%)	54.1

OPAKA

POPOVO

TARGOVISHTE

ANTONOVO

OMURTAG

Overview

The gross domestic product as well as incomes in Targovishte District have continued to considerably lag behind the national averages. The poor economic development of the district predetermines the population's relatively low standard of living. The district has the second lowest economic activity of the population among all twenty-eight districts. Although unemployment in the district equals the national average, Targovishte is among the districts with the lowest employment rate. Quite a small number of enterprises and foreign investment almost half the country aver-

age are among the reasons for the low economic activity. The relatively low taxes and the relatively high transparency of local government bodies could be considered a stimulus for more investments.

Almost half the district's population live in villages. There is a relatively small share of university graduates in the working population and the entire districts suffers from a lack of general practitioners and health professionals. Courts function relatively well in the district and the workload of penal judges is extremely low.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

	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
	●	●			

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
Demography	●	●			
Education	●	●			
Healthcare	●				
Security and Justice	●	●	●	●	
Environment	●	●	●		
Culture	●	●	●		

📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ● ●

👛 Income and Living Conditions ● ●

Targovishte District has slowly started to recover following the initial deterioration of the economic situation due to the onset of the economic crisis. Regardless of this, the district's GDP and incomes have continued to lag considerably behind the national average levels. The average annual income per household member was the second lowest in Bulgaria in 2014 (after Silistra District).

Low incomes and insufficient employment have also predetermined the relatively worse indicators regarding poverty and living conditions in the district. 47.7% of the district's population lived in material deprivation in 2012, compared to the country average of 43%. Both the share of people living in households with low work intensity (17.9% compared to the country average of 11.6%) and the share of people living below the district's poverty line (25% compared to the nationwide average of 21%) are higher than the country averages.

👤 Labour Market ● ●

Although the unemployment rate in Targovishte District equalled the national average of 11.4% in 2014, the district faces serious problems with economic activity and employment. The economic activity rate of 45.2% in 2014 (compared to the country average of 54.1%) was the lowest nationally after that of Lovech District (41.1%). The employment rate was 40.1% (compared to 48% for Bulgaria), thus ranking Targovishte among the five districts with the lowest employment, after Lovech, Silistra, Vidin and Vratsa.

Data on demographic replacement demonstrate a better situation in Targovishte compared to most districts and the country. The ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 was 67.8% (61.9% regarding Bulgaria) in 2014, which means that 68 young people would join the labour market per 100 people who would leave it.

🏭 Investment ● ●

After the districts of Kardzhali and Montana, Targovishte was the district with the lowest number of companies in proportion to the population in 2013. Foreign investments are almost half the national average, but the lower drop of expenditure on FTAs during the crisis and the acceleration of investment activities since 2012 allowed Targovishte even to exceed the country average in 2013.

EU funds utilised by the district's municipalities are below the country average. 486 BGN per capita were paid in Targovishte District as at the end of January 2015 (compared to the country average of 565 BGN per capita); most funds have been drawn down by Popovo Municipality (1,243 BGN per capita).

🚌 Infrastructure ● ●

Both the road network density and its quality are higher than the country average. 47% of roads were in good condition in 2014, a drop of 10 pp for two years, but still above the country average of 40.5%.

Targovishte District ranked third in Bulgaria in 2014 for lowest share of households with Internet access: 41.8% compared to the country average of 57%. The share of people to use the Internet was more than 10 pp lower: 49% for the district compared to 59% for the country.

% Taxes and Fees ● ● ● ●

The municipalities in Targovishte District have continued to maintain relatively low rates of local taxes and fees in 2015 as well. The annual license tax for retailers is considerably lower than the country average – there is no municipality in Targovishte charging more than 10 BGN per sq. m, while the country average is almost 13 BGN per sq. m. The immovable property tax for legal entities, on average for the district's municipalities, is the third lowest in Bulgaria.

💼 Administration ● ● ●

Targovishte is among the four districts featuring the lowest share of territory included in cadastral maps. 6% of the district's territory was included in cadastral maps in 2014, which was three times less than the national average (18.1%). The level of development of local government e-services and one-stop shop services is also below the country average and has not progressed much in 2015.

The district's results for transparency of local government bodies are relatively good. The municipalities of Popovo and Targovishte received the highest grades for transparency by the AIP Foundation in 2015 – 66.4 points, 62.9 points respectively, compared to the country average of 54.5 points.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Similarly to the situation in the entire country, Targovishte District had a negative natural increase of –6.7‰ in 2014, compared to –5.7‰ for Bulgaria. The net migration rate is also negative (–4.4‰) but higher as an absolute value than those in the other districts from the North-eastern region, except Razgrad District. The age dependency ratio (65+ to 0–14) is lower than the country average, meaning that ageing is less pronounced in Targovishte District. Nonetheless, the difference has gradually decreased in recent years.

Almost half of the district's population live in villages, which ranks the district fourth in terms of the lowest share of urban population following the districts of Kardzhali, Razgrad and Silistra.

Education

There is no institution of higher education in the district, and the share of university graduates was 10 pp below the country's average of 27% in 2014.

In characteristics on the state of secondary education Targovishte is distinguished as one of the districts with a relatively high net enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) of 81.6% in 2014 compared to the country average of 78.6%. Grades from state matriculation exams have traditionally been lower than the country average, but the share of failed students fell in 2015. Targovishte was the second district in 2013 (after Sliven) with the highest share of dropouts from primary and secondary education: 4.3% compared to the country average of 2.4%.

Healthcare

Healthcare indicators in the district disclose disturbing trends. Targovishte is one of the districts with the highest scarcity of general practitioners. There is also a need for specialized health professionals. Targovishte is the second district (after Razgrad) with the highest insufficient number of specialists in Cardiology, and one such specialist treated four people more than the country average on average in 2014.

In the number of beds in multi-profile hospitals in proportion to the population the district is near the country averages, but along with Montana, Targovishte is the district with the highest morbidity rates judging by the share of cases of hospitalisation in 2014.

Security and Justice

Penal judges in Targovishte District have less work compared to those in any other district. While the country average was 8.3 cases per month per judge in 2013, the judges at Targovishte District Court tried 3.5 cases per month per judge. The low workload is a prerequisite for the quicker ruling of cases. 94% of criminal cases heard by the District Court in 2013 were closed in the first 3 months compared to the country average of 88.4%. Despite the low workload and the relatively high share of cases closed in the first 3 months, the share of pending criminal cases is higher in the district than the country average – 9.6% compared to 8.5% for Bulgaria.

Registered crimes against property were half the country average in 2014 at 49.1 per 10,000 people for the district, compared to the country average of 89 per 10,000 people.

Environment

Targovishte District is still one of the districts with the lowest emissions of carbon dioxide: they were three times lower in 2013 compared to the country average. The district's expenditure on environmental protection was three times lower than the country average as well. A total of 95.2 BGN per capita were spent on environmental protection in 2013 (a bit more than 11 m BGN), compared to the country average of 289 BGN per capita.

The share of the population with access to public sewerage systems connected to waste water treatment plants has been relatively low (44.1% compared to the country average of 56.4%), just like the share of the population in settlements with public sewerage systems (56.1% compared to the country average of 74.7% in 2013).

Culture

Targovishte District has demonstrated disparity in the indicators measuring its cultural life. On the one hand, the district has performed well in number of visits to theatres and libraries; the number of visits per 1,000 people of the population is higher than the country average with regard to both indicators. At the same time, the district has reported a much lower number of visits to cinemas and museums. Visits to cinemas were 8.5 per 1,000 people in 2014 (compared to the country average of 706 per 1,000 people), and visits to museums were 178 per 1,000 people (compared to the country average of 662 per 1,000 people).

Key Indicators for the District of Targovishte

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,311	5,546	6,548	6,929	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,373	2,354	2,695	2,924	3,025	3,546
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,389	5,620	5,913	6,556	7,195	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	19.2	17.3	21.2	25.0	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	50.6	49.9	52.1	50.3	45.3	45.2
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	45.6	44.0	45.7	42.5	38.2	40.1
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	9.9	11.7	12.4	15.6	15.7	11.4
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	32	31	31	31	32	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,136	911	1,299	2,165	2,700	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	1,173	1,405	1,607	1,562	1,784	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	21.0	20.2	24.3	38.3	29.4	41.8
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	55.0	54.2	58.0	52.0	47.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−4.3	−4.9	−5.7	−6.0	−5.8	−6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	−7.7	−9.5	−3.7	−3.1	−3.2	−4.4
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	16.0	13.1	15.2	17.9	16.7	17.3
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.0
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	13.2	11.2	8.7	7.6	4.5	6.9
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.2	83.8	87.9	86.9	85.8	86.9
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	242.1	218.9	234.6	241.7	257.3	250.8
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	76.9	81.9	64.2	56.6	59.4	49.1
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	6.7	8.1	6.1	8.7	9.6	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	93.6	95.8	106.5	122.2	95.2	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	0.0	12.0	44.1	44.1	44.1	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	28.0	25.9	26.0	24.6	36.4	8.5
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	191.5	245.6	364.5	373.1	479.8	506.3

Varna District

▶ Population (2014)	473,940
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,819.5
▶ Number of settlements	159
▶ Share of urban population (%)	83.8

Overview

The economic crisis badly impacted Varna District, but its GDP recovered to 2008 pre-crisis levels as early as 2011. The district has relatively high incomes and salaries. The employment rate started to rise in recent years, while unemployment began to fall. Domestic and foreign investment decreased as a result of the crisis and remained below the national average. Being an important transport centre, the district has performed very well regarding the indicators that evaluate the state of the infrastructure, in comparison with the rest of the country.

The demographic situation is more favourable compared to Bulgaria's average and Varna has remained one of the few districts with a net inflow of migrants from other districts. The district has demonstrated varying performance in the Education category – the number of dropouts and repeaters is high, but students have got higher grades than the country average at state matriculation exams, and college graduates represent a relatively high share of the workforce. Varna constitutes one of the few districts in Bulgaria with a relatively sufficient number of medical staff. Simultaneously, Varna has been among the districts with the lowest share of health-insured persons.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
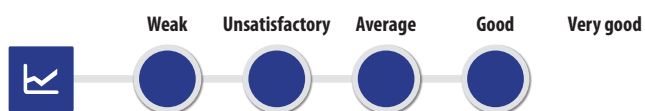
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	
Income and Living Conditions	●	●	●		
Labor Market	●	●	●	●	
Investment	●	●	●	●	
Infrastructure	●	●	●	●	●
Taxes and Fees	●				
Administration	●	●	●	●	

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	
Demography	●	●	●	●	
Education	●	●	●		
Healthcare	●	●	●	●	
Security and Justice	●	●			
Environment	●	●	●		
Culture	●	●	●		
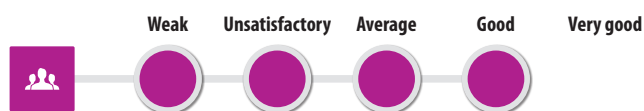
📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

💰 Income and Living Conditions ●●●

Despite the shrinking economy in 2009 and 2010, the district's GDP started to increase again in 2011 to reach its pre-crisis level in nominal value. In 2012 GDP increased to 11,165 BGN per capita compared to the country average of 10,958 BGN. Incomes were also traditionally higher than the average national figure and they exceeded 5,000 BGN per capita in 2014. Salaries have the highest share in incomes and their share is higher than the country average – 64% from incomes compared to 56% for Bulgaria. The share of pension incomes is lower – 22% for the district and 27% for the country. Although Varna ranks among the top five districts in terms of salaries, the rate of the average annual gross salary in the district is lower than the weighted average for Bulgaria due to the high salaries in the capital city and its big weight in the calculation of the average salary. In 2013 the Varna average yearly salary reached 8,992 BGN compared to the national figure of 9,301 BGN.

👤 Labour Market ●●●●

The economic activity of the population in the district is higher than the country average though it dropped below the national average figures in 2011. Not until 2013 did it start to intensify, reaching 54.5% in 2014 – a value insignificantly higher than the country average. The rise in economic activity was prompted by the recovery of the employment rate in 2013–2014. Following a drop in 2010–2012, the employment rate in Varna was again higher than it was nationwide and reached 49.8% in 2014 compared the country's average of 48%. Simultaneously, the unemployment rate dropped significantly for the past couple of years to reach 8.7% in 2014 compared to 11.4% for Bulgaria. The demographic replacement rate in the district has been more favourable than the country average for the past several years. It decreased to 66.2% in 2014 (compared to 61.9% for Bulgaria), which means that 66 individuals, aged 15–19 that would be joining the workforce in the following several years, would replace 100 individuals, aged 60–64.

🏭 Investment ●●●●

Varna ranks third (following the capital city and Burgas), with the biggest number of companies relative to the population, after it parted with its second place in favour of Burgas for the first time in 2013. Domestic investment shrank substantially from 2008 to 2012 while expenditure for acquisition of FTAs per capita started to increase in 2013 but remained below the country average: 2,385 BGN compared to 2,490 BGN regarding Bulgaria. The situation is similar with attracted foreign investments. An outflow of foreign capital was observed from 2010 to 2013; in 2013 the accrued sum per capita was less than the country average.

The utilization of EU funds has also lagged. As of 31 January 2015, municipalities in Varna received 491.8 BGN per capita under the operational programmes compared to 564.9 BGN per capita for the country. Most funds per capita have been utilised by the municipalities of Byala (3,781.7 BGN), Beloslav (2,127.9 BGN) and Aksakovo (1,547.6 BGN), and the municipality of Dalgopol has drawn down the least (107.5 BGN). It should be noted that no municipality in the district has utilised less than 100 BGN per capita.

🚌 Infrastructure ●●●●●

Varna constitutes an exceptionally important transport centre for Bulgaria. The district's infrastructure includes the biggest port and the second biggest airport. The density of the road and railway networks is bigger than Bulgaria's average rates and the quality of the roads in the district is still in a relatively good condition. In 2014 43.5% of roads were in good condition compared to 40.5% for Bulgaria. Internet access in the district has retained its level above the country average for a successive year. In 2014 58.9% of households had access to the Internet compared to 56.7% for the country. The share of Internet users was also higher: in 2014 63.2% of the district's residents had used the Internet for the past 12 months, this share being 59.2% in Bulgaria.

% Taxes and Fees ●

Similarly to most economically developed districts, Varna has maintained relatively high local taxes and fees throughout the years. In 2015 the variances in the annual license tax for retailers are the greatest – their rates in the district's municipalities are above the country average by about 30%. Taxes on the property of legal entities and those on vehicles are more than 10% higher. Only the household waste charge is lower.

💼 Administration ●●●●

The development of e-government and one-stop shop services has been better than the country average. Furthermore, Varna has established itself as the best-performing district with regard to these two indicators in recent years (2013–2015). Simultaneously, the transparency of self-governing bodies has been lower than the country average. In 2015, the AIP Foundation assessed it with 51.5 points (out of 88.4 points), with the country average being at 54.5 points. The transparency of the administrations in the municipalities of Avren and Aksakovo has been assessed highest (64.4 and 62 points respectively), and it was lowest in the municipalities of Beloslav (33 points) and Suvorovo (35.1 points).

⚖ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

⚏ Demography ●●●●

The district's demographic situation is more favourable than the national average. The rate of natural increase was within –1.1‰ from 2006 to 2010, but the rate of decrease went up in the following years and reached –2,7‰ compared to the national figure of –5.7‰. The district had a positive net migration rate of 2.1‰ in 2014, ranking it fourth after the districts of Burgas, Kardzhali and Sofia (Capital City). Ageing, measured via the age dependency ratios, is also less pronounced than the general nationwide trend. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to the population aged 0-14 was 118.8% in 2014 compared to Bulgaria's average of 144.3%. An increasingly bigger part of the population lives in towns and cities, and the relative share of urban population is higher than the country average by 10 pp. In 2014 the urban population of the district was 83.8% compared to the country average of 73.1%.

▤ Education ●●●

The evaluation of the district in the Education category has various aspects. On the one hand, the enrolment rate of the population (grades 5th through 8th) was relatively low in 2014 compared to the country average (73.5% compared to 78.6% for the country), the share of repeaters was relatively high (1,6% compared to the national figure of 1.4% in 2014), and the share of dropouts from primary and secondary schools reached 2.7% compared to 2.4% in 2013. On the other hand, students performed better than the national average at state matriculation exams. In 2015, the average grade at the state matriculation exam was 4.4 compared to 4.2 regarding Bulgaria, and the share of failed students was 5.2% compared to the country average of 6.4%. Featuring 30,000 university students in 2014, the district ranked third (following Veliko Tarnovo and the capital city) for the highest number of students relative to the population. The share of graduates has been traditionally higher than the country average – 33.8% of the population compared to 27% for the country in 2014.

✚ Healthcare ●●●●

Varna is one of the few districts in Bulgaria with a sufficient number of medical staff on a relative basis. Both the number of general practitioners and the number of key health professionals have not varied considerably from the country average compared to the population. Simultaneously, Varna has been among the districts with the lowest share of health-insured persons for a third successive year, which signals possible issues related to healthcare access. In 2014, health insured persons constituted 83.8% compared to 87.1% in Bulgaria. The small number of beds in MpHATs (3.6 per 1,000 peo-

ple compared to 4.8 per 1,000 people in the country) demonstrates the relatively limited access. Inpatients in MpHATs were 169.8 per 1,000 people in 2014 compared to 175.4 per 1,000 people in the country.

⚖ Security and Justice ●●

The crime rate is relatively high in the district. 6.9 crimes against the person per 10,000 people compared to 5.9 in the country were registered in 2014. Crimes against property, however, were 117.9 per 10,000 people compared to 89 per 10,000 people in the country. Despite the high crime rate, the courts' workload was below the average in 2013, and there were 7.7 cases per month compared to 8.3 cases for Bulgaria. The relatively low workload probably brought about the higher share of cases closed in the first 3 months (91% compared to the national average of 88.4% in 2013), as well as the lower share of pending cases (8.3% compared to 8.5%).

⚘ Environment ●●●

The district has relatively high levels of carbon dioxide emissions. Although they decreased in 2012 and 2013, they ranked Varna third among the districts with the highest harmful emissions per sq. km (following the districts of Stara Zagora and the capital city). Collected household waste relative to the population has also been higher than the country average. The district provides good access to sewage and has high connectivity of people to waste water treatment plants. In addition, Varna has the best results after Sofia (Capital City) for both indicators while its entire sewage network is connected with waste water treatment plants. Expenditure on environmental protection amounted to 340.2 BGN per capita in 2013 (compared to 288.9 BGN per capita for the country) which ranks Varna sixth among the districts spending most on the environment.

⚉ Culture ●●●

In 2014 Varna ranked second (after the capital city) in visits to the cinema: 1,193 per 1,000 people compared to 709 per 1,000 people for Bulgaria. With regard to the other indicators measuring culture, however, the district has underperformed when compared with the national average. In 2014 visits to theatres were 234 per 1,000 people compared to the national average of 319 per 1,000 people, and those to museums – 365 per 1,000 people compared to 662 per 1,000 for the country. Library visits have been fluctuating in the district while they have been consistently on the rise in the country. 363 people per 1,000 people visited libraries in 2014 while the average national figure reached 518 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Varna

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,004	9,691	10,655	11,165	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,020	3,735	3,739	4,306	4,912	5,008
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	7,159	7,533	8,144	8,562	8,922	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	21.6	23.8	22.7	23.7	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	55.3	54.0	51.9	52.9	54.4	54.5
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	52.9	49.6	46.5	44.2	47.0	49.8
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	4.3	8.2	10.3	16.4	13.7	8.7
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	71	71	65	66	66	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	3,020	2,406	2,299	2,137	2,385	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	3,532	3,292	3,162	3,105	3,005	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	28.4	28.1	40.1	51.3	57.1	58.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	23.1	36.7	39.0	42.6	43.5
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	11.0	11.1	11.1	11.1	11.4	11.9

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	0.5	−1.1	−1.5	−2.1	−2.4	−2.7
Net migration rate (‰)	4.2	0.3	0.5	−0.2	3.8	2.1
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	25.5	25.6	25.4	26.0	31.4	33.8
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.2	4.4	4.3
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	3.5	4.0	3.5	5.1	4.7	5.1
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	90.6	87.9	85.2	84.4	83.2	83.8
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	170.2	163.3	155.2	170.2	177.7	169.8
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	109.1	127.4	128.7	125.4	132.2	117.9
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	7.9	5.8	5.7	5.8	8.3	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	199.1	155.9	249.2	307.1	340.2	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	84.4	84.8	85.1	86.1	86.2	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	515.9	1025.6	1159.3	1108.3	1156.7	1193.2
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	153.7	177.1	171.3	178.6	218.3	233.9

Veliko Tarnovo District

▶ Population (2014)   249,454

▶ Area (sq. km)   4,661.6

▶ Number of settlements   337

▶ Share of urban population (%)   70.0

Overview

The economy of Veliko Tarnovo District recovered relatively fast from the crisis, and it was as early as 2010 that the GDP per capita exceeded its pre-crisis levels. A constantly rising employment rate has been observed for the past several years: it was already higher in 2014 than in 2008. Foreign investment in the district continued to be among the lowest in Bulgaria but the region more or less successfully managed to draw down funds under European programmes. The comparatively small volume of investment in the district has probably been due to the poor quality of the infrastructure, the relatively high local taxes and fees and the low effectiveness of the local administration.

The social development of Veliko Tarnovo District has been assessed as good. On the one hand, the good results of the district have been preconditioned by the big number of university students, the relatively low crime rate and the exceptionally high interest in museums and libraries. On the other hand, the demographic state has deteriorated due to the more intensive ageing of the population in comparison with the other districts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Income and Living Conditions

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Labor Market

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Investment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Infrastructure

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Taxes and Fees

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Administration

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Demography

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Education

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Healthcare

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Security and Justice

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Environment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Culture

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	●

📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

👛 Income and Living Conditions ●●●

The economy of Veliko Tarnovo District has continued to lag behind the average indicators for Bulgaria, although the nominal GDP growth per capita (3.8%, to 7,163 BGN) was higher than the country average in 2012 (2.7%, to 10,958 BGN).

Incomes per capita decreased in 2014 compared to 2013 following several years of constant, though slow, growth. Veliko Tarnovo has remained the district with the highest share of property incomes in the total household income (3%). The yearly salary continued to grow in 2013 outweighing the salary growth in the country. Simultaneously, the share of people living in material deprivation, as well as the share of the poor in the district, decreased.

👤 Labour Market ●●●

The good trends on the district labour market have continued. The employment rate increased and it already exceeded its 2008 level in 2014, featuring the highest growth in the entire country (with 3.6 pp compared to the nationwide average of 1.1 pp), although the average employment rate (48%) was not reached. Veliko Tarnovo remained the district with the biggest number of employed people in the North Central Region since 2011.

The unemployment rate went down to 11.7% in 2014, which was close to the national average of 11.4%, in line with the increase of the employment rate.

The ongoing intensification of economic activity has brought the district's data closer to the country's average figures since 2010. In 2008, the economic activity of the population 15+ was 5.5 pp lower than Bulgaria's average, but the difference diminished to 1.4 pp in 2014.

🏭 Investment ●●

In Veliko Tarnovo, the accrued FDIs per capita continued to be among the lowest in Bulgaria in 2013; the district ranked fifth in terms of the smallest total of investments compared to the population, following the districts of Haskovo, Kyustendil, Montana and Silistra. The number of non-financial companies (40 per 1,000 people compared to the country's average of 52) and the expenses for acquiring FTAs (1,576 BGN per capita compared to 2,490 BGN for the country) are relatively low.

In comparison with the low investment activities of the enterprises, the municipalities in Veliko Tarnovo performed relatively well in the utilisation of EU funds. As of 31 January 2015, the municipalities in the district received 620.8 BGN per capita compared to the national average of 564.9 BGN. The municipality of Lyaskovets attracted most European funds (843.2 BGN per capita, or a total of 10 m BGN), followed by the municipalities

of Svisthov and Veliko Tarnovo. The smallest sums were paid in the municipalities of Suhindol and Polski Trambesh (49.3 BGN per capita, 51.1 respectively).

🚌 Infrastructure ●●●

The density of the road network in Veliko Tarnovo district has remained slightly above the country average. Nonetheless, the rating for road quality is considerably below the national average. Although the share of roads in good condition has increased for the past three years, only a little over one quarter of the district's roads (27.7%) were in good condition in 2014 compared to 40.5% for Bulgaria. The relative share of households with Internet access and the share of people who had used the Internet for the past 12 months have remained below the nationwide average despite a long-term growing trend.

% Taxes and Fees ●

The local taxes and fees in the municipalities of Veliko Tarnovo District are relatively high. The difference in properties of legal entities is the highest compared to Bulgaria's average – all municipalities in the district have preserved higher tax rates than the national average. As for the vehicle tax, Veliko Tarnovo Municipality applies the highest rate in Bulgaria for 2015 (1.76 BGN/kW for automobiles with power from 74 kW to 110 kW).

Generally, the municipalities in the district have lower tax rates than those in the other districts of Bulgaria for the annual license tax for retailers and the waste collection charge for properties of legal entities.

💼 Administration ●●

The share of the district's territory included in cadastral maps is relatively small. While 18.1% of Bulgaria's territory was in the cadastral map in 2014, the share of Veliko Tarnovo District was 6.7%, and the progress has been very slow in recent years.

The grade regarding the reached level of e-administration and one-stop shop services has also been below the country average; only the administration of Veliko Tarnovo Municipality achieved good results.

The grades for the transparency of local government bodies increased in 2015 compared to 2014, but remained lower than the national average. The municipalities of Strazhitsa and Svisthov are the most transparent, and Lyaskovets is the least transparent one.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Demography ●●

Population ageing in Veliko Tarnovo District is more acute than in most districts in Bulgaria due to the less favourable rate of natural increase and the net migration rate of the district's population. In 2014, more people left the district than settled in it, and the rate of natural decrease worsened again following a slight improvement in the previous year.

The lower share of the urban population compared to the national average, as well as the lower population density, were preserved in 2014.

Education ●●●●

In 2014, Veliko Tarnovo District ranked first in terms of the number of university students relative to the population (108 per 1,000 individuals compared to 38 pertaining to Bulgaria and 83 pertaining to the capital city) for yet another year. The total number of students was 27,000. Regarding the number of students Veliko Tarnovo District ranked fourth after the districts of Plovdiv, Sofia (Capital City) and Varna. Despite the good traditions in higher education, the share of graduates in the working population is insignificantly higher than the national average, which suggests that graduates seek jobs and homes in other districts following their graduation. Veliko Tarnovo District does not score very good results in secondary education. The net enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) and the results from state matriculation exams are comparable with the country average, but a relatively high proportion of students drop out from primary and secondary schools (3.2% compared to the country average of 2.4%).

Healthcare ●●●●

Veliko Tarnovo has continued to be the district featuring the lowest share of health-insured persons in Bulgaria – 83.1% compared to 87.1% for Bulgaria in 2014. There is a shortage of both general practitioners and key specialists, along with the relatively high proportion of people who have no valid health insurance. The ratio of the number of beds in MpHATs to the population is considerably lower than the country average. Given such indicators of health insurance and the access to healthcare, the share of inpatients in the population remains lower than the national average, but this share has continuously grown in recent years. The low share of inpatients in hospitals throughout the district could be due more to the use of healthcare outside the district, because of the lack of specialists, than the lower morbidity rate. The share of inpatients has constantly grown in recent years, which could be explained by the fast ageing of the district's population. The infant mortality rate has re-mained relatively low, and the district ranks third among the lowest infant mortality rates in Bulgaria, following Gabrovo and Smolyan.

Security and Justice ●●●●

Veliko Tarnovo is one of the districts with the lowest crime rates: the registered crimes against individuals were 3.8 per 10,000 people in 2014 compared to 5.9 for Bulgaria, and the crimes against property were 65.7 per 10,000 people compared to the national average of 89.0.

The indicators on justice in the district also demonstrate good results. 94% of criminal cases were completed within 3 months in 2013, which was almost 6 pp above the average for all districts. The share of pending cases was 7.4% compared to 8.5% for Bulgaria. Veliko Tarnovo is also one of the districts where the judges' workload is relatively low: there are 6.3 cases per month, per judge, and there are 8.3 cases per judge per month regarding the country. In comparison, one judge in the capital city hears an average of 15 cases per month.

Environment ●●

Veliko Tarnovo District demonstrates lower results than the country average in the indicators that measure the state of the environment. The reasons for the poor grade of the district in this category are complex. On the one hand there is the relatively low share of the population with access to sewage connected with waste water treatment plants, and the population residing in settlements with a public sewerage system: the district has not progressed significantly in both indicators in recent years. On the other hand, expenditure per capita for environmental protection was about two times smaller than the figure for the country in 2013 and it decreased by about a quarter in comparison with 2012.

Veliko Tarnovo District is distinguished positively in producing half of the country-average emissions of carbon dioxide per sq. km.

Culture ●●●●●

Visits to theatres and libraries, relative to the population, were three times higher than Bulgaria's average in 2014. In addition, the district ranked first in Bulgaria in terms of the annual number of visits to libraries per 1,000 people and it ranked third with regard to visits to museums per 1,000 people following the districts of Gabrovo and Sofia. Both indicators have grown for the past five years.

Visits to cinemas and theatres have grown in recent years again but more slowly than the country average in 2014.

Key Indicators for the District of Veliko Tarnovo

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,967	6,349	6,901	7,163	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,409	3,502	3,648	4,043	4,385	4,288
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,765	6,119	6,488	6,742	7,262	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	24.2	26.9	19.7	15.2	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	46.8	44.8	48.2	49.8	51.2	52.7
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	42.6	38.9	42.6	42.9	42.9	46.5
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	9.0	13.1	11.7	13.8	16.2	11.7
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	40	40	39	40	40	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,027	980	1,516	1,482	1,576	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	249	246	284	331	359	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	23.1	29.6	45.0	41.0	46.6	55.0
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	55.7	30.2	23.6	25.7	27.7
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	3.4	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.7

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−6.5	−7.9	−7.9	−7.9	−6.9	−8.2
Net migration rate (‰)	−1.2	−6.8	−2.0	−3.0	−2.7	−5.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	24.2	23.0	21.5	23.5	26.6	27.3
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.3	4.2
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	3.6	5.7	5.6	6.2	6.6	5.5
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	83.7	80.9	84.2	83.3	82.2	83.1
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	153.9	136.6	138.9	142.2	146.9	149.4
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	72.6	90.9	95.7	83.8	72.0	65.7
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	6.4	7.7	8.4	8.6	7.4	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	80.9	74.3	94.9	202.9	156.8	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	40.9	41.2	43.9	44.2	44.5	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	183.0	350.2	376.3	340.4	396.3	470.8
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	38.3	54.5	67.3	102.2	122.9	122.3

Vidin District

▶ Population (2014)	94,414
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,032.9
▶ Number of settlements	143
▶ Share of urban population (%)	64.4

Overview

Vidin ranks among the districts with the lowest GDP per capita, the lowest incomes and some of the least favourable indicators for social inclusion and living conditions in Bulgaria. The labour market condition is very poor in the district. Investment activity is low, and two municipalities only (Belogradchick and Vidin) have reached the national average rate of drawing down funds under the EU operational programmes. The tax environment is relatively favourable, but the development of administrative services has lagged considerably.

Vidin is the district where the negative demographic trends are the most visible. In 2012, Vidin became the first district in Bulgaria with less than 100,000 people residing in it. There is no institution of higher education, and the share of graduates relative to the population is low. The population is relatively well provided with general practitioners, and the deficiency of key specialists, even though present, is not that acute when compared to other districts. Vidin was the only district lacking a water treatment plant in 2013, the construction of one started in 2014. The crime rate is about the country average, but the share of pending criminal cases remains high.

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
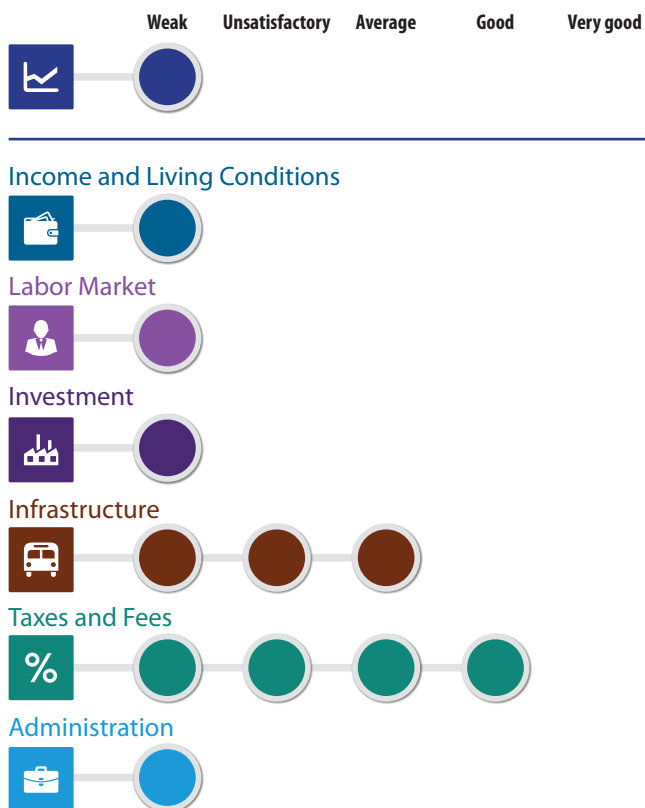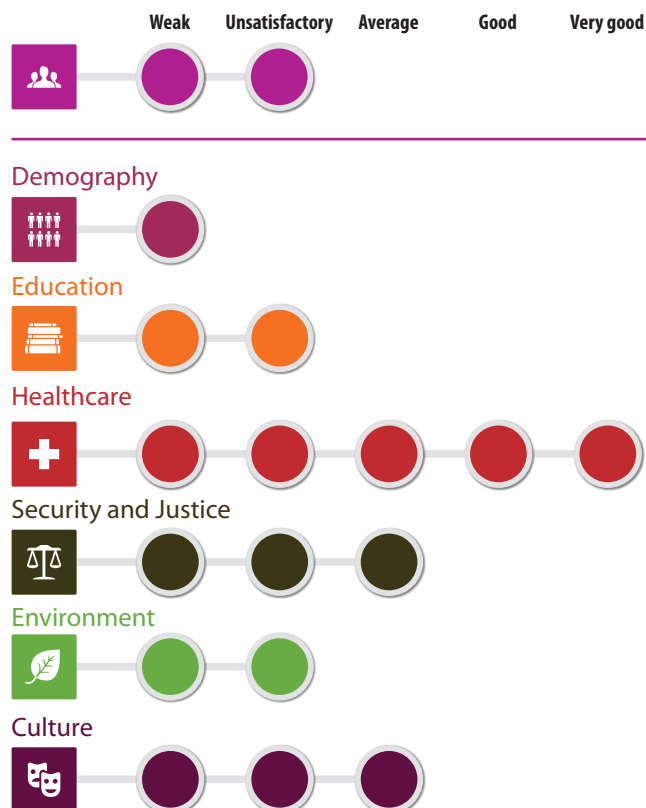
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and Living Conditions

Vidin is the district with one of the lowest levels of GDP per capita, the lowest salaries and one of the worst indicators for social inclusion and living conditions in the country. GDP per capita amounted to 5,384 BGN in 2012 – more than two times lower than the country average and 4.5 times lower than the capital city. The average annual gross salary was 6,195 BGN in 2013 compared to the national average of 9,301 BGN. The average salary was lower by 13.1% than the country average in 2000 and lower by 33.4% in 2013.

The share of the population living in households with low work intensity was 27.2% in Vidin. Only Pazardzhik District has a higher value of this indicator – 31.9%. Although the relative poverty line for the district is lower than the country average of 3,431 BGN by 20%, 31.2% of the population lived below it in 2012, which constitutes the second highest share of the poor population among all districts after Sliven District. More than 50% of the population lives in material deprivation.

Labour market

Although the economic activity rate of the population has increased considerably in recent years (from 41.8% in 2009 to 49.8% in 2014), this has mainly been due to the rising unemployment rate.

Following a slight enhancement from 2011 to 2013 (a rise from 35.8% to 39.6%), the employment rate of the population 15+ started to diminish again reaching 38.8% in 2014. Vidin was one of the four districts where the employment rate of the population also remained lower than 40% in 2014, along with the districts of Lovech, Silistra and Vratsa. The annual average unemployment rate reached 22.2% in Vidin in 2014, the highest level since 2005. Only the district of Silistra has a higher unemployment rate, 22.4%.

Investment

Vidin is one of the districts with the lowest investment activity in Bulgaria. Expenditure on the acquisition of FTAs (66.8 m BGN in 2013) relative to the population was the lowest in Bulgaria and amounted to 692 BGN per capita compared to the national average of 2,490 BGN per capita.

The (accrued) amount of FDIs already exceeded the pre-crisis peak of 45.0 m euros (as of the end of 2007), reaching 59.3 m euros as of the end of 2013. Relative to the population, this figure amounted to 628.3 BGN per capita compared to the country average of 3,230.9 BGN for the country.

The municipalities of Belogradchik and Vidin are the only ones in the district to have achieved a relatively good absorption of funds under the EU operational programmes. All the other municipalities have considerably lagged,

and Gramada Municipality has not received any funds from the EU structural funds yet, as of 31 January 2015.

Infrastructure

The road network density (20.1 km per 100 sq. km) was higher in the district than the country average (17.7 km per 100 sq. km), and its railway density was identical with the national average of 3.6 km per 100 sq. km in 2013. In Vidin District, the share of roads in good condition gradually increased from 2013 to 2014 reaching 34.2%. Nevertheless, similarly to other districts in the Northwest Region, the district remains well below the country average of 40.5%.

In 2014 the share of individuals aged 16–74, who had used the Internet exceeded the country average for the first time, reaching 62%. Nonetheless, the share of households with Internet access has remained low – 45.4% for the district compared to 56.7% for Bulgaria.

Taxes and Fees

The tax environment is relatively favourable, and most local taxes and fees are considerably below the national average. In particular, the average annual licence tax for retailers is the lowest in Bulgaria, and the vehicle tax is the second lowest after Ruse District.

There have been only three alterations in the rates of main local taxes and fees since 2012. Novo Selo Municipality raised the tax on real property owned by legal entities in 2013 (from 2.00‰ to 2.50‰) and the businesses' waste charge (from 2.50‰ to 3.50‰), and Gramada Municipality lowered the annual waste collection charge from 4.00 to 3.60‰.

Administration

The cadastral map encompassed barely 2.1% of the district's territory as of 2014, and all listed territories were located in Vidin Municipality and were listed back in 2008. In 2014 the cadastral map covered 18.1% of the territory on a national scale while it remained unchanged in Vidin District.

The development of e-services and one-stop shop services has considerably lagged. For two years in a row none of the municipalities in the district was rated higher than the country average in the Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. The weighted average for the district is 34.7 points out of 88.4 points while for Bulgaria it is 54.5 points. The municipalities of Kula (43.1 points) and Belogradchik (42.1 points) scored the highest points while Chuprene (20.1 points) and Ruzhintsi (23.5 points) received the lowest ones.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ● ●

Demography ●

Vidin is the district where the negative demographic trends are most visible. The population shrank almost three times faster than the country average from 2001 to 2014. In 2012, Vidin became the first district in Bulgaria with less than 100,000 people residing in it. The district is relatively poorly urbanised. 64.4% of the population lives in towns and cities compared to the country average of 73.1%.

The population's age structure impacts the rate of natural increase. Vidin District is the only one where the rate of natural increase has dropped below –13‰, and in recent years it has been between –14‰ and –16‰. The net migration rate has also been negative for the past 15 years without exception. The number of people to leave the district decreased in 2011 and 2012 but then went on rising again.

Education ● ●

The enrolment rate was close to the national level of 78.6% in 2014, and the relative share of repeaters was 1.1% compared to the national average of 1.4%. The district's school-leavers have gradually performed better at state matriculation exams, and the average grade was similar to the national one in 2015 – Good (4.21), while the number of failed students remained below the national average.

Vidin is one of the five districts without universities or their branches. This is one of the reasons for the low share of people with college degrees in the district – 17.2% compared to 27.0% for Bulgaria in 2014.

Healthcare ● ● ● ● ●

89.8% of the district's citizens were health-insured persons in 2014, the average for Bulgaria being 87.1%. The second most favourable ratio of the number of general practitioners to the local population, after the district of Pleven, is observed in Vidin District.

The ratio of the number of beds in MpHATs to the local population remained the same as the national average of 4.3 beds per 1,000 people till 2010. The decrease in the number of beds in the district was greater than the decrease in the population, and this ratio was 3.8 beds per 1,000 people in 2014 while the country average rose to 4.8 beds per 1,000 people.

Vidin is one of the districts where the number of inpatients in MpHATs increased in 2014, but it has still demonstrated a relatively low morbidity rate in comparison with the national average. The infant mortality rate continued to be more than 10‰ from 2012 to 2014 and it was one of the highest in the country.

Security and Justice ● ● ●

The real workload of penal judges is among the smallest in Bulgaria. On average, there were 5.6 cases per month per judge in the District Court compared to 8.3 cases in the country in 2013. Only Montana and Pernik feature lower workloads. Nonetheless, the share of pending criminal cases did not total less than 10% from 2011 to 2013, and the share of criminal cases completed within 3 months was close to the country level despite the low workload.

Excluding the sharp increase of 2010, the ratio of registered crimes against individuals to the local population was more favourable than that for Bulgaria from 2005 to 2014. The ratio of registered crimes against the person to the population was similar to, but lower than the country average figures in 2013 and 2014 – 96.8 per 1,000 people, and 88.7 per 1,000 people respectively.

Environment ● ●

Vidin is one of the districts with the lowest expenditure on environmental protection – barely 13.1 m BGN in 2013, or 136.3 BGN per capita compared to 288.9 BGN per capita for Bulgaria. The share of the population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage system was 56.6% in 2013 or considerably lower than the country average of 74.7%. Vidin remained the only district in Bulgaria without a water treatment plant in 2013. The construction of one began in 2014 as part of the water cycle project of Vidin City.

Carbon dioxide emissions were half the country average of 293.9 t/sq. km in 2013.

Culture ● ● ●

The intensity of cultural life is higher in Vidin District than in most other districts. The annual average number of visits to museums is much lower than the levels recorded in 2009, but their ratio to the population is almost more than double the country average of 662 visits per 1,000 people. Visits to libraries and theatres are also higher than the country average.

The first cinema since 2006 was opened at the end of 2014, and its capacity is 139 seats. A total of 13,000 visits were recorded for the year, which makes 137.7 visits per 1,000 people compared to 706 for Bulgaria. This number of visits was registered in the course of less than 3 months. Maintaining this interest toward films in 2015 would near the country average annual rate of attendances.

Key Indicators for the District of Vidin

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,174	4,928	5,327	5,384	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,385	2,794	3,052	3,615	3,614	4,383
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,251	5,422	5,532	5,855	6,195	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	29.3	36.2	34.1	31.2	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	41.8	40.2	44.7	44.8	48.2	49.8
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	36.4	35.0	35.8	37.0	39.6	38.8
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	13.0	13.1	19.8	17.4	17.7	22.2
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	34	33	32	32	32	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	701	492	874	1,156	692	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	165	312	329	622	628	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	25.3	27.7	46.6	33.7	44.0	45.4
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	43.4	30.0	29.4	32.3	34.2
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−13.8	−14.8	−15.2	−16.0	−14.3	−15.2
Net migration rate (‰)	−6.9	−6.2	−1.9	−3.8	−7.1	−7.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	16.4	18.9	18.1	15.7	14.6	17.2
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.3	4.5	4.1	4.2	4.2
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	6.2	3.6	1.9	8.3	4.8	3.7
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	89.5	86.7	89.8	89.1	88.4	89.8
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	160.4	142.7	150.2	148.4	161.6	166.3
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	79.1	110.7	92.8	74.7	96.8	88.7
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.5	8.2	10.5	10.0	10.0	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	35.5	55.6	79.0	68.7	136.3	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	137.7
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	194.1	237.7	257.2	280.3	336.3	342.0

Vratsa District

▸ Population (2014)	176,782
▸ Area (sq. km)	3,619.8
▸ Number of settlements	128
▸ Share of urban population (%)	58.9

KOZLODUY
ORYAHOVO
MIZIA
Hayredin
BYALA SLATINA
Borovan
KRIVODOL
VRATSA
MEZDRA
ROMAN

Overview

Despite the fact that average salaries are relatively high in the district, the low employment rate and the unfavourable demographic processes impact the rate of total incomes. Investment activities have remained less intensive than the country average, but municipalities have managed to attract European funds. The tax environment is favourable, the effectiveness of the administration is improving, but the level of infrastructure development remains low.

The population age structure is more favourable compared to the other districts in the Northwestern Region of Bulgaria, but it remains worse than that for Bulgaria. In education there is a disparity of results – a good proportion of children in school, but poor results of school-leavers. Healthcare is relatively well developed, and expenditure on environmental protection in relation to the local population was the highest in Bulgaria in 2013. The district's crime rate has been traditionally high, but the work of courts has been relatively fast. The number of visits to local cinemas, museums and theatres has been relatively low.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Income and Living Conditions

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Labor Market

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Investment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Infrastructure

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●				

Taxes and Fees

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Administration

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Demography

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

Education

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Healthcare

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Security and Justice

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	

Environment

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●	●	●

Culture

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●			

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●

In 2013 the average annual gross salary was 9,383 BGN in Vratsa District compared to the national figure of 9,301 BGN. Only Sofia (Capital City) and Stara Zagora have higher levels. The relatively high salaries in the Kozloduy NPP are the most likely reason for that. Nevertheless, due to the low employment rate and the demographic situation, the structure of household incomes is unfavourable. In 2014 incomes from salaries accounted for 48.3% from gross household incomes, and those from pensions to 33.4% thereof, the country average being 56.2%, and 26.7% respectively. In 2014 the annual average income per household member amounted to 4,234 BGN, the country average being 4,813 BGN.

In 2012 17.9% of the population lived in households with low work intensity, and the relative share of the poor reached 26.6% compared to the country average of 21.0%. In 2012 GDP per capita amounted to 9,105 BGN compared to the country average of 10,958 BGN.

Labour Market ●●

The economic activity of the population increased in 2013 and 2014 reaching 48.3%, the highest level since the beginning of the economic crisis. Nonetheless, the labour market situation has not improved so far. Vratsa is one of the seven districts where the unemployment rate has continued to rise reaching 18.1% in 2014 compared to the country average of 11.4%. The employment rate went up slightly compared to 2013 but stayed below 40%. Only the districts of Lovech, Silistra and Vidin have lower employment rates.

In 2014 there were 65.4 people aged 15–19, who were to join the labour market, per 100 individuals, aged 60–64, who were to leave it.

Investment ●●

Despite the bettering of the indicators in 2013, the investment activity is still unable to reach the 2010 levels. FDIs accounted for 157.7 m euros in the district as of the end of 2013. Relative to the number of the local population, they equalled 891.9 euros per capita, which constitutes barely 27% of the country average. Investments in FDIs have gradually increased but remain lower than pre-crisis levels.

As of 31 January 2015, the municipalities of Vratsa District have managed to draw down 159.7 m BGN as beneficiaries under the EU operational programmes. This accounts for 903.6 BGN per capita, which is the fifth best result among all districts. The municipalities of Mezdra, with 1,485.6 BGN per capita, and Byala Slatina, with 1,241.6 BGN per capita, have the highest rate of absorption of EU funds while the municipalities of Mizia and Borovan have the lowest – 171.2 BGN per capita and 30.4 BGN per capita respectively.

Infrastructure ●

Vratsa is the district that has the lowest grade in infrastructural development. Although the road network density is identical in the district to the country average, 17.7 km per 100 sq. km, the quality of roads is not good. 21.2% of roads were in a good condition in 2014, which was the lowest relative share in the country – almost half the average. The railway network density (3.1 km per 100 sq. km) was lower than the national average of 3.6 km per 100 sq. km.

38.5% of households had Internet access in the district in 2014, again the lowest share compared to Bulgaria's average. The relative share of persons who used the Internet was 48.2%; lower levels have been recorded only in the districts of Kardzhali, Kyustendil, Pernik and Stara Zagora.

Taxes and Fees ●●●●

The tax environment in Vratsa District is favourable in terms of both the rates of taxes and fees and their stability. The immovable property tax for legal entities is the only tax with an average level higher than the national average. The annual license tax for retailers features the biggest variance when compared with the country average. In the district, the average rate of this tax is 6.84 BGN per sq. m in 2015 compared to the national average of 12.72 BGN per sq. m.

The levels of most local taxes and fees have remained unchanged throughout the entire period from 2012 to 2015. The only changes have affected the vehicle tax, which was cut in Borovan Municipality in 2013 (from 2.00 to 1.10 BGN per kW) and raised in Kozloduy in 2014 (from 1.10 to 1.15 BGN per kW).

Administration ●●●

The municipalities in Vratsa District were close to the country average in the 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation. The municipalities of Kozloduy and Krivodol were rated highest (70.1 points out of 88.4 points, 62.4 points respectively), and the municipalities of Borovan and Hayredin had the lowest grades – 27.6 points, 34.6 points respectively. One-stop shop services have been introduced in most municipalities, and e-services are most developed in Kozloduy, Oryahovo and Vratsa.

The inclusion of the district's territories in cadastral maps lags behind. In 2014 the cadastral map covered 7.1% of the district and included territories fell within the boundaries of just three municipalities: Kozloduy, Mezdra and Vratsa. For comparison, the average national figure was 18.1%.

⚖ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

⊞ Demography ●●

The age dependency ratios, calculated as the ratios of the population aged 65+ to the population aged 0–14 and to the population aged 15–64, present a rather unfavourable demographic development in the district. While these ratios are 144%, and 30% respectively for the country, those for Vratsa District are 171% and 36%, which sets an unfavourable trend and a considerable demographic burden on the active population.

The net migration rate was negative and it was among the top ones in Bulgaria in the past couple of years (–7.4‰ in 2013 and 2014). The population in 2014 was 76,300 people less than it was in 2000 as a result of ongoing emigration and deteriorating age structure. That means that the district's population has declined about three times faster than the country average. Vratsa District is one of the least urbanised in Bulgaria. 58.9% of the population lived in towns and cities in 2014 compared to the country average of 73.1%.

☰ Education ●●●

Vratsa District has a very high net enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) – 85.0%. Razgrad is the only other district with such a figure for this indicator, and the rate for the country is 78.6%. The share of repeaters is also smaller in the district than the country average. The relative share of dropouts from primary and secondary education was 2.7% in 2013 compared to 2.4% for Bulgaria. The average grade of school-leavers at state matriculation exams has usually been poorer than the country average and 2015 was no exception – the average grade was 4.1 in the district compared to 4.2 in the country. The share of failures drastically increased – from 4.1% in 2014 to 7.7% in 2015.

There were 774 university students in the district in 2014 – the highest number since 2000. The share of graduates increased for three years in a row reaching 22.1% compared to the country average of 27.0%.

✚ Healthcare ●●●●

The share of health insured persons was 88.6% of the district's residents in 2014, the country average being 87.1%. The ratio of the population to the number of general practitioners and internists was more favourable than it was nationwide. Simultaneously, the ratio to cardiologists (11,049 people per cardiologist) was almost double the country average.

The number of beds in MpHATs increased from 724 in 2010 to 810 in 2014 (4.6 beds per 1,000 people) which neared the ratio of the number of beds to the local population to the country average of 4.8 beds per 1,000 people. The infant mortality rate was lower than the country average from 2007 to 2013, but it increased in 2014 to 8.7‰ compared to the country's average of 7.6‰.

⚖ Security and Justice ●●●●

Vratsa is one of the districts with the highest share (95.0%) of criminal cases tried by the District Court to be closed in the first 3 months. The share of pending criminal cases is low – about 3% in 2013 compared to the country average of 8.5%. This effectiveness could partly be explained by the relatively low workload of penal judges in the District Court. In 2013 there were 6.3 cases per judge per month on average compared to the national average of 8.3 cases per judge.

Simultaneously, the crime rate has been relatively high. The registered crimes against the person and property relative to the population were higher than Bulgaria's average rates during the greater part of the period 2000–2014.

🌿 Environment ●●●●●

Vratsa was the district which had the highest spending on environmental protection relative to the population in 2013 – 153.4 m BGN or 852.6 BGN per capita compared to the national average of 288.9 BGN per capita. Carbon dioxide emissions total 91.4 t/sq. km, which is more than three times less than the country average of 293.9 t/sq. km.

Slightly more than 55% of the population lived in settlements with access to sewerage in 2013 compared to the country average of 74.7%. The population connectivity to waste water treatment plants has also lagged – 32.4% of the district's population compared to 56.4% for Bulgaria. A waste water treatment plant was launched in the summer of 2015 in the town of Mezdra, which is likely to improve this indicator in the coming years.

🎭 Culture ●●

The intensity of cultural activities was lower than the country average throughout the period 2009–2014. Museum attendances were 3.5 times fewer than the country average of 662 attendances per 1,000 people in 2014. Visits to theatres and libraries were closer to the national average.

In 2014 the number of visits to local cinemas ranked second lowest among all districts possessing cinemas – 17 visits per 1,000 people. Only the district of Targovishte recorded a smaller number of visits (9 per 1,000 people), and the country average was 706 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Vratsa

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,245	7,841	8,682	9,105	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,447	3,798	3,395	3,723	4,108	4,234
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	7,696	8,509	8,657	9,231	9,383	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	23.8	16.9	20.5	26.2	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	45.8	43.7	45.3	44.0	46.2	48.3
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	42.1	39.9	41.0	39.9	39.4	39.5
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	7.9	8.6	9.3	9.4	14.9	18.1
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	32	33	31	32	32	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,656	1,909	1,555	1,474	1,625	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	840	916	929	834	892	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	26.4	27.0	34.5	45.8	48.2	38.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	28.6	29.3	26.7	17.9	21.2
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−9.4	−10.4	−9.9	−11.1	−10.1	−10.8
Net migration rate (‰)	−5.2	−6.5	−3.2	−5.8	−7.4	−7.4
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	19.0	20.0	18.0	18.2	20.4	22.1
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.3
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	4.4	4.2	3.7	6.3	3.6	4.1
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	89.1	86.0	88.6	88.0	87.4	88.6
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	189.7	170.1	165.6	206.3	227.3	191.0
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	116.9	143.9	137.6	121.1	117.3	86.1
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	1.8	2.8	3.3	3.8	3.0	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	633.9	842.6	494.1	357.3	852.6	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	30.9	31.0	32.4	32.4	32.4	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	7.4	13.0	13.3	8.3	2.7	17.0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	71.8	118.0	182.6	204.1	232.4	278.9

Yambol District

▶ Population (2014)	126,450
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,355.5
▶ Number of settlements	109
▶ Share of urban population (%)	70.3

Straldzha

YAMBOL

ELHOVO

Bolyarovo

Overview

Yambol was one of the few districts where there was no GDP drop at the beginning of the crisis. Nevertheless, the district's GDP per capita, as well as incomes and salaries, have remained below the country averages. Unemployment, however, increased, and employment decreased with the onset of the crisis. Yambol District ranked fourth as at the end of 2013 with the smallest cumulative inflow of foreign investments, but utilisation of EU funds by the district's municipalities has been relatively good. Most local taxes and fees in Yambol District are also about the country averages in 2015 but the local administration has lagged behind in transparency.

Population ageing is relatively more evident in Yambol District due to the number of people leaving the district and the high negative natural increase. Yambol was the district with the highest share of failed students at the state matriculation exams in 2015. A higher share of health-insured persons and lower morbidity rates, compared to the country average, characterise the district. The crime rate has been relatively low for the past 10 years. The workload of penal judges at the District Court has also remained low, but, nonetheless, the share of pending cases has surged.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT					
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Income and Living Conditions

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Labor Market

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Investment

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Infrastructure

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Taxes and Fees

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Administration

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT					
	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
	●	●	●		

Demography

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Education

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

Healthcare

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●	●	

Security and Justice

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Environment

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●	●		

Culture

Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good
●	●			

📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ● ● ●

💳 Income and Living Conditions ● ● ●
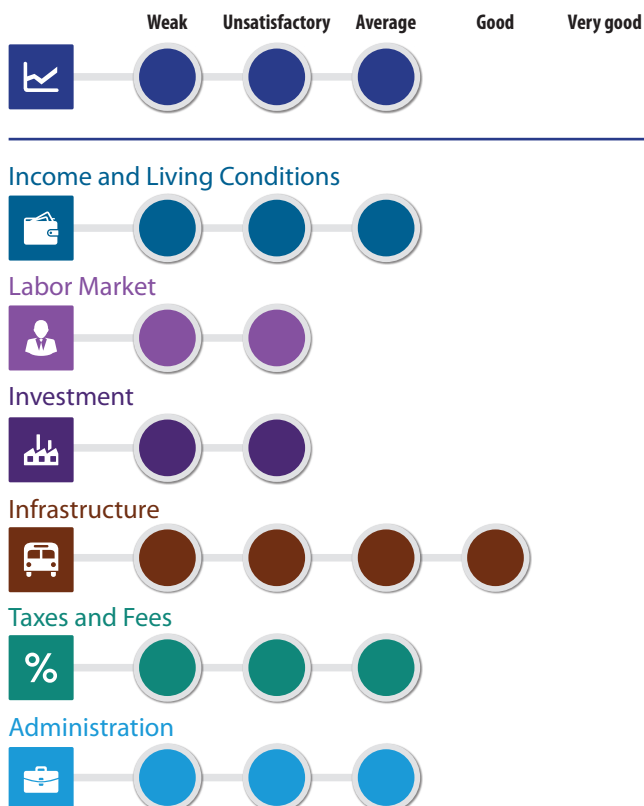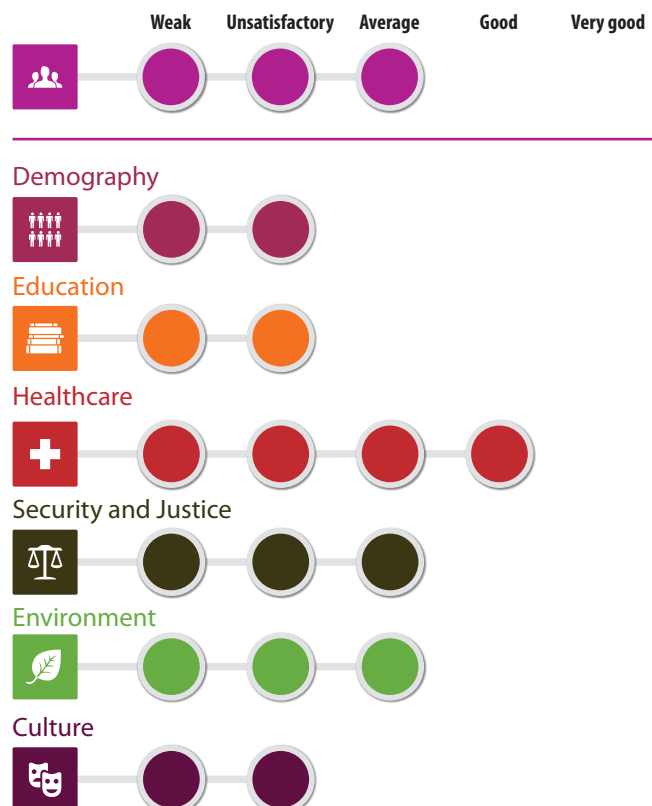
Yambol was one of the few districts where there was no GDP drop at the beginning of the crisis. By contrast, the nominal GDP per capita has even increased at a yearly rate of 5% since 2008, and by about 10% per annum in 2011 and 2012, reaching 6,937 BGN per capita in 2012. Still, GDP per capita has remained below the country average. Incomes are also relatively low. The annual income per capita in the district was 4,133 BGN in 2014, compared to 4,813 in Bulgaria. Moreover, the average annual income per household member has increased by 89% for the past 10 years in Yambol District while the national average increased by 109%, i.e. income in the district has grown at a slower rate. Salaries have faced a similar situation in Yambol District – an increase of 169% for 10 years (reaching 7,111 BGN per employee, gross, in 2013), the country's average growth being 184% (9,301 BGN in 2013).

👤 Labour Market ● ●

Although aggregate production did not decrease with the onset of the crisis, labour market conditions aggravated a lot. Given that unemployment in the district has fluctuated about the country average, it reached 15% in 2014 compared to the average of 11.4%. Contrary to the increasing employment rate in most of Bulgaria, employment in the district has dropped for the past couple of years to reach 44.7% in 2014 compared to the country average of 48%. Economic activity, which had been above the national average for the past three or four years, gradually decreased and was already below the national average in 2014: 52.6% compared to the country average of 54.1%. The demographic replacement rate was the eighth lowest in Bulgaria in 2014. There were 57.3 people aged 15–19 per 100 people aged 60–64 compared to the country average of 61.9.

🏭 Investment ● ●

At the end of 2013 Yambol District had the fourth smallest cumulative inflow of foreign investments (53 m euros, or 0.2% of the overall foreign investments) and was one of the six districts with the lowest foreign investment per capita (421 euros, or 8 times less than the country average of 3,231 euros per capita). Expenditure on acquisition of FTAs was half the country average in 2013 in proportion to the population: 1,326 BGN per capita compared to the country average of 2,490 BGN per capita. Municipalities have performed better in the utilisation of EU funds. As of 31 January 2015 the municipalities in Yambol District received 603.5 BGN per capita under the operational programmes compared to 564.9 BGN per capita for the country. Tundzha Municipality drew down most funds (1,105.1 BGN per capita), and Elhovo Municipality has utilised least (69.1 BGN per capita).

🚆 Infrastructure ● ● ● ●

Yambol District was one of the few districts where the railway network grew smaller in 2013 after the closing of the railway line between Yambol and Elhovo whose rails are to be dismantled. Simultaneously, road network density is higher in the district than the country average. The district has traditionally had a high quality of roads. 51.7% of roads were evaluated as being in good condition in 2014 compared to the country average of 40.5%. The share of households with Internet access is high, just like the use of the Internet by people aged 16–74. 8.4% of all households in the district had Internet access in 2006, Bulgaria's average being 17%. This share rose to 57.2% in 2014 in Yambol District, compared to the country average of 56.7%. In 2014 64.5% of citizens living in the district had used the Internet in the past 12 months compared to the country average of 59.2%.

% Taxes and Fees ● ● ●

In 2015 the rates of most monitored local taxes and fees in the municipalities of Yambol District are about the country average. This refers to the immovable property taxes for legal entities, vehicle taxes and taxes on the sale of immovable property. The annual license tax for retailers, on the other hand, is considerably lower than the country average – 8.20 BGN per sq. m of retail space compared to the country average of 12.72 BGN per sq. m in 2015. There are big differences between the district's municipalities in the rates of this tax. While the rate of this tax was 10 BGN per sq. m for a successive year in Yambol Municipality, in Straldzha Municipality it remained 4 BGN per sq. m. The annual waste collection charge is also lower in the district's municipalities compared to their national counterparts.

💼 Administration ● ● ●

The level of local government e-services in the district has continued to be higher than the country average in 2015. The local administrations' self-assessment regarding one-stop shop services, on the other hand, has been considerably lower than the country average for the past three years. Territory inclusion in the cadastral map has also lagged a little – 16.6% of Yambol District's territory was included in the cadastral map in 2014 (compared to the country average of 18.1%), a figure which has not increased in the last five years. The 2015 Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies, issued annually by the AIP Foundation, ranked Yambol District below the country average – the district was evaluated at 45.7 points in 2015 out of 88.4, compared to the country average of 54.5 points. Tundzha Municipality was rated as the most transparent (63.5 points) and the municipalities of Straldzha and Elhovo as the least transparent ones (42.1 points, 43.1 points respectively).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●

Demography ●●

Population ageing stands out in Yambol District. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 was 155.9% in 2014 compared to the national average of 144.3%. The rate of natural increase in Yambol District has been below the national average for years to reach −7.6‰ in 2014, compared to the country average of −5.7‰. The net migration rate was also negative in 2014 (−3.8‰), although it fell considerably below its two-digit levels since the beginning of the crisis.

Education ●●

The net enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) has traditionally been higher than the country average, which means more of the children subject to education were in school: 83.5% compared to the country average of 78.6%. The relative share of repeaters and the share of dropouts from schools are close to the national average. However, the district has been among those with the highest shares of failed students at state matriculation exams since 2010. Yambol even ranked first with the highest share of failed students in 2015 – 15.6% compared to the country average of 6.4%. It also had the third lowest average grade at the state matriculation exams in 2015.

The number of teachers in primary and secondary education has continued to drop, and in 2014 Yambol was one of the districts with the smallest number of teachers in primary and secondary schools in proportion to students – 64 teachers per 1,000 students compared to the country average of 72 per 1,000 students.

The share of the working-age population with university degrees stayed below the national average in 2014: 23.7% compared to the country average of 27.0%.

Healthcare ●●●●

The district has relatively good access to health services in terms of the share of health-insured persons. Health professionals are generally available as well, though the number of internists slumped in 2014.

At the same time, Yambol was one of the five districts characterised by the smallest number of hospital beds in proportion to the population in 2014 – 3.1 per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 4.8 per 1,000 people. In 2014 the district ranked among the top ones with the smallest number of hospitalisations since they dropped to 139 per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 175.4 per 1,000 people. Though the infant mortality rate has generally diminished in recent years it was rather high in 2014.

Security and Justice ●●●

Crime rates have been relatively low for the past ten years and while the number of registered crimes against property had tended to rise prior to the economic crisis, their number has been falling fast after 2009 and 2010. 4.6 crimes against the person per 10,000 people, compared to 5.9 for the country, and 65.2 crimes against the property per 10,000 people, compared to the country average of 89, were registered in 2014.

The workloads of the district's courts increased in 2013 following several years of decline but continued to be among the lowest in Bulgaria – 6.3 cases per month per judge compared to the country average of 8.3 cases per month, per judge. The share of pending criminal cases soared with the more intensive workload, to reach even above the country average in 2013 – 10.3% compared to the country average of 8.5%. The share of criminal cases closed in the first 3 months has also diminished.

Environment ●●●

The emissions of carbon dioxide increased in the district between 2011 and 2013, but they were also considerably lower than the country's average levels in 2013. The share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems is close to the national average. Failure to construct a network of waste water treatment plants has continued to be a problem. 3.6% of the population had access to public sewerage systems connected to waste water treatment plants in 2013, thus ranking the district far below the country's average share (56.4%). Expenditure on environmental protection was more than half the country average in proportion to the population in 2013, although it increased by approximately 60% compared to one year earlier.

Culture ●●

In this category, Yambol District has reported a result higher than the country average for another year only in the average annual number of visits to theatres relative to the population. Visits to theatres increased again in 2014 – 421.2 visits per 1,000 people compared to the country average of 319 visits per 1,000 people. The number of visits to cinemas also increased, but was five times lower than the national average in 2014. Visits to museums were 251 per 1,000 people in 2014 compared to the country average of 662 per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Yambol

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,418	5,716	6,335	6,937	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,036	3,722	3,602	3,814	4,572	4,133
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,701	6,034	6,343	6,679	7,111	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	21.1	24.4	16.9	15.3	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	50.8	50.5	54.5	56.9	55.0	52.6
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	46.4	43.0	47.0	48.4	46.2	44.7
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	8.8	14.8	13.6	14.9	16.1	15.0
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	42	43	43	43	44	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,351	892	1,624	3,011	1,326	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	259	468	522	513	421	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	27.9	27.9	40.7	46.0	44.8	57.2
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	48.0	54.6	54.0	50.3	51.7
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	15.1	16.6	16.6	16.6	16.6	16.6

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−6.2	−7.4	−7.0	−7.8	−6.5	−7.6
Net migration rate (‰)	−10.0	−11.8	−4.4	−3.8	−5.0	−3.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	18.3	19.2	18.0	22.4	24.2	23.7
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.0	4.3	4.5	4.1	4.2	4.1
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	4.4	8.4	5.1	10.6	8.5	10.0
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	90.1	88.1	90.5	89.8	88.8	89.9
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	158.3	154.7	144.5	160.3	167.7	139.0
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	96.5	132.6	101.4	81.0	79.1	65.2
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	5.4	6.4	6.7	7.4	10.3	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	62.9	60.5	59.2	80.0	127.4	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTTP (%)	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.6	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	67.4	82.9	85.0	61.2	59.3	134.4
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	257.2	228.8	296.4	277.6	382.5	421.2

Methodology

Subject Matter, Space and Time Scope of the Study

The comparative analysis of districts in Bulgaria constitutes the subject matter of the publication 'Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development'. The analysis covers Bulgaria's entire territory and is based on information about the last fifteen years for which there are data for the indicators within the scope of this study. Official statistics and data obtained by 30 June 2015 under the Access to Public Information Act have been used for the purposes of providing information for the analysis and for creating regional profiles. All updated data published later have not been included in the analysis.

Provision of Information

Two main sources – official statistics and information gathered under the APIA – have provided the information necessary for drafting and regular updating of the publication 'Regional Profiles: Development Indicators'.

The main source of official statistics is the national statistical system, in particular the National Statistical Institute (NSI). Another part of the necessary information was collected from the information systems of the National Social Security Institute (NSSI), the National Centre of Public Health and Analyses (NCPHA), the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), the National Revenue Agency (NRA), etc.

Methodological Approach

The basic principles on which the methodology is founded are as follows:

1. The method of presenting the regional profiles is not one of ranking (arranging) the districts, but, rather one of creating and analysing typical, characteristic groups of districts.
2. A combination of one-dimensional complex metrics and multidimensional methods of regional comparisons, which largely allows to avoid the flaws of one-dimensional and complex metrics and also to utilise the advantages of multidimensional methods, is used.
3. One of the most advanced methods of regional comparisons – that of neural networks, is used for creating and visualising typical groups of districts (clusters).
4. A reliability analysis is applied when organising the system of indicators.
5. The choice of indicators and their inclusion in the system is based on four main groups of arguments: good practices, reasoning, availability of information and analysis of empirical data.
6. Official and statutory terms, classifications, nomenclatures, etc. are used.
7. Relative shares, ratios and others are used instead of the absolute values of indicators for the sake of providing comparability between districts.
8. Setting of norms is implemented for indicators in order to eliminate negative effects of scale, measurement units, etc.

Grouping of Districts

Depending on the static analysis of indicators per category, district performance is assessed by means of a five-point scale: from 'poor' (the minimum degree) to 'very good' (the top degree). The analysis is based on the last year with available data (2014). Data for 2013 and 2012 is used for that part of the indicators for which there is no data for 2014.

Types of District Profiles

The methodological approaches in regional comparisons can be summarised in the following three types, according to the use of:

► One-dimensional metrics,
► Complex metrics,
► Multidimensional methods (in particular neural networks).

A combination of the three approaches has been adopted in this methodology; it allows, on the one hand, to largely overcome the flaws of one-dimensional and complex metrics, and, on the other hand, to utilise the advantages of multidimensional methods.

All indicators are normalised by calculating a so called *regional index*.

For each category of indicators for the assessment of regional profiles, a so called complex indicator is calculated; it has the following characteristics:

▶ It provides comparability between districts,

▶ Its values are centred around the country average. Districts with positive values of the complex indicator are above the country average, and those with negative values – below it.

▶ The differences (ratios) between districts concerning individual indicators are preserved in the variance correction procedure, which ensures unchanged grades when calculating the complex indicator.

The methodology used till 2014 has been amended and supplemented. The outlining of the types of regional profiles has been done via the interrelated use of factor analysis and neural networks. The advantage of factor analysis is its ability to reduce the initial set of indicators to a smaller number of summarised factors called main components. These factors are also called hidden because they are not present in the original array of indicators.

The main components method allows to characterise the districts without significant loss of initial information and allows certain typologies to be distinguished on the basis of hidden (not obvious prior to the reduc-

tion) factors. Thus it is possible to analyse the districts' state in terms of any of the hidden factors. Since the hidden factors are independent in this type of factor analysis (by main components), this allows to show what part of the difference (variance) between the districts results from the effect of any of the hidden factors.

At the final stage of applying the combined approach, the summarising result for all categories of indicators and all districts is presented and visualised by clusters with the help of neural networks.

System of Indicators

The selection of indicators is based on both their relevance to various aspects of the economic or social profile of the district and their interconnectivity and fluctuation. The availability, accessibility and regularity of publicising the indicators constitute a key argument for their selection or the publication of primary data necessary for their calculation. Two basic sections are thus specified – Economic Development and Social Development. Each includes 6 categories characterising the various aspects of the social and economic condition and development of the districts.

Every category contains a set of indicators that give a realistic idea about the state and development dynamics of the relevant territory.

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	●	●	●	●	●
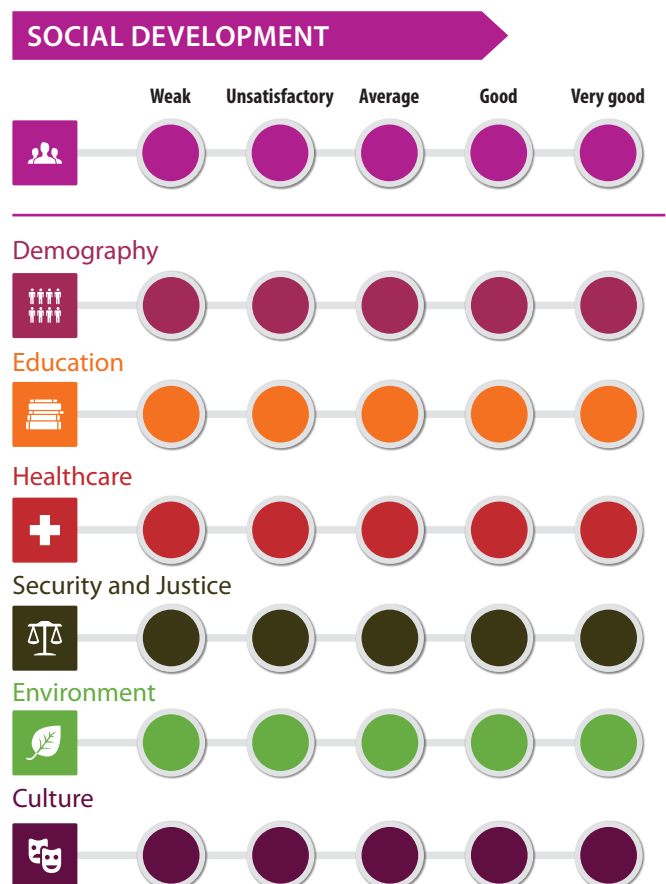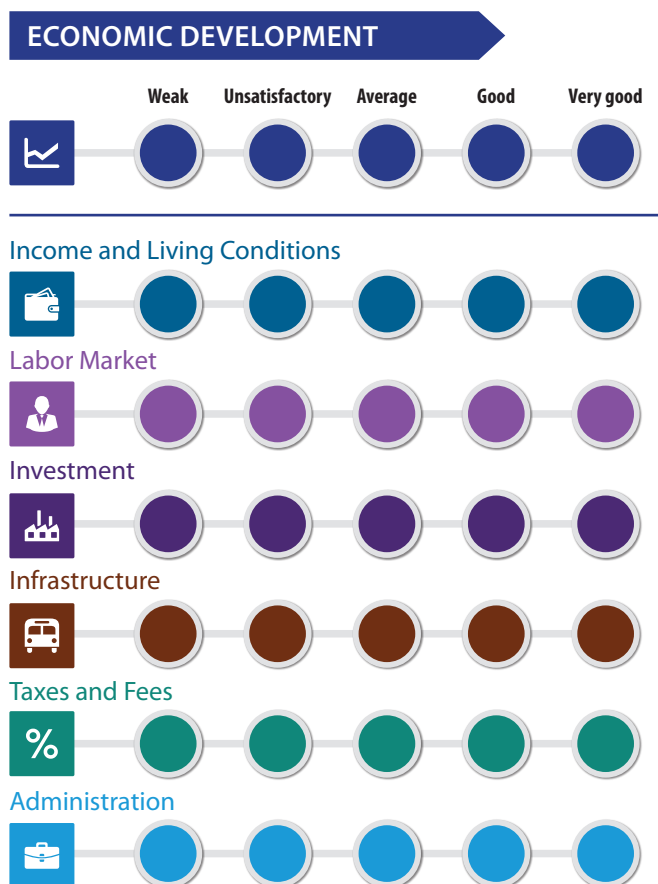
The total number of indicators used in the methodology of the study is 63.

This year's study includes 10 new indicators in comparison with last year.

The new indicators in the field of economic development are as follows:

▶ Average annual gross salary (in the Income and Living Conditions category) – this indicator provides additional information about households' incomes throughout districts, and about the condition of the labour market there.

▶ Demographic replacement rate (in the Labour Market category) – this indicator is used for evaluating the reproduction capacity of the workforce in individual districts.

▶ Economic activity rate of the population 15+ (annual average) (in the Labour Market category) – this indicator provides additional information regarding the labour market condition in districts.

▶ Share of territory included in cadastral maps (in the Administration category) – this indicator is used as an important index concerning the state of the business environment in terms of the administrative services rendered by municipalities.

The new indicators in the field of social development are as follows:

▶ Expenditure on environmental protection (the Environment category) – this indicator provides information allowing comparisons between districts about the funds spent on the acquisition or maintenance of tangible and intangible assets with environmental use.

▶ Average annual number of visits to libraries (the Culture category) – this indicator provides infor-

mation on the intensity of cultural activities in a district.

▶ Average annual number of visits to museums (the Culture category) – this indicator provides information on the intensity of cultural activities in a district.

▶ Share of criminal cases closed in the first 3 months (the Security and Justice category) – the indicator allows comparison of the relative effectiveness of local judicial bodies in individual districts.

▶ Share of pending criminal cases (the Security and Justice category) – the indicator allows to compare the relative effectiveness of local judicial bodies in individual districts.

▶ Actual workload of penal judges (the Security and Justice category) – this indicator allows to compare the actual workload of penal judges and constitutes an indirect indicator of the access to justice.

As a consequence of the structural change in the districts' socioeconomic profiles, several other changes were made in the indicators used till 2014. The complex indicator of the number of registered crimes against the person and property has already been separated into two individual indicators: crimes against the person and crimes against property. The data source for the level of development of local government e-services and one-stop services has been changed. In the previous years' studies, data received under the APIA from municipalities was the source of information. In the 2015 edition, municipalities' self-assessment reports submitted to the Information System for Completing Reports on the State of the Administration have been used instead.

A summary table of all indicators included in both sections and the twelve categories of the regional profiles is presented below.

Groups of Indicators

〜 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

💳 Income and Living Conditions

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita	This indicator measures the standard of living in the district and the degree of development of the local economy. The higher GDP per capita the district has, the more indicative this is of a strong local economy and a higher standard of living for local residents.	2000–2012	BGN per capita	NSI
Average annual income per household member	The indicator shows the general welfare and living standards of the local population. For the purposes of this study, we used the total income, including cash income (salaries and wages, pensions, social benefits, transfers from other households, proceeds from sales, etc.) and valued in-kind income.	2001–2014	total income/ person of the household/BGN	NSI
Average annual gross salary	Wages are among the main sources of household income.	2000–2013	BGN	NSI
Relative share of population living in households with low work intensity	These are people aged 0–59 living in households where adults worked less than 20 per cent of their work potential during the preceding year.	2007–2012	%	NSI
Relative share of population living in material deprivation	This is a subjective indicator based on surveys of households according to specific indicators of material deprivation. There are nine indicators, according to the European standard questionnaire, related to difficulties in meeting the costs of housing, ownership of a car or a washing machine, meat consumption, restrictions on heating, etc. A person is defined as living in material deprivation if experiencing deprivation on four of these nine indicators.	2007–2012	%	NSI
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line	These are people with an equivalent disposable income below the so-called "poverty line", that is set at 60% of the national (in this case regional) median equivalent disposable income. All three indicators of poverty are classic indicators used by Bulgarian and European statistics.	2007–2012	%	NSI

👤 Labor Market

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Economic activity rate of the population 15+ (annual average)	The economic activity rate shows what part of the population is employed or actively seeks employment. The economically active population forms the labor force in each district.	2008–2014	%	NSI
Unemployment rate of the population 15+ (annual average)	Low levels of unemployment in a district are the sign of a vibrant job-creating local economic environment.	2001–2014	%	NSI
Employment rate of the population 15+ (annual average)	The employment rate is a leading indicator of the labour market showing what proportion of the working age population is actually employed.	2001–2014	%	NSI
Demographic replacement rate (ratio of the number of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64)	The demographic replacement rate shows the ratio of the number of people aged 15–19 (who are about to enter the labor market) to those aged 60-64 (which are about to leave it). The demographic replacement rate is used as an indicator of the reproductive capacity of the labor force in the country's districts.	2001–2014	%	NSI

⚒ Investment

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	The indicator shows the viability of the local economy in terms of availability of a sufficient number of small and medium-sized enterprises. The presumption is that a high number of enterprises is mainly caused by a high proportion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The large number of SMEs generally ensures greater diversification and hence resistance to shocks of the local economy.	2000–2013	number of non-financial companies/ 1,000 people	NSI
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita	The level of expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (FTA) per capita in the district indicates the level of investment that in turn is indicative of how local companies see the prospects of their business endeavours.	2000–2013	BGN/capita	NSI
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative)	The indicator of foreign direct investment (FDI) in nonfinancial enterprises shows the flow of investment to the district and its attractiveness to investors – in this case, foreign investors.	2000–2013	EUR/capita	NSI
Utilisation of EU operational program funds per capita	The high rate of utilisation of EU funds under Bulgaria's operational programs creates preconditions for the improvement of regional competitiveness. It is an indicator of the good performance of local administrations, as well as their ability and willingness to improve living and business conditions with the help of EU funds.	to 31.01.2015	BGN/capita	MoF

🚌 Infrastructure

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Road network density	The road density indicator measures the total length of highways and roads (first, second and third class) relative to the area of the respective district. The republican road network is essential for the transport of passengers and goods in the country. The indicator does not include streets in urban areas.	2000–2013	length of the road network km/ 100 sq. km. of area	NSI
Railway network density	This indicator represents all railway lines between stations or places indicated as independent points of departure and arrival of trains carrying passengers and cargo. It excludes the urban railway lines. The greater the density of the rail network in the region, the easier the transportation of passengers and cargo.	2000–2013	length of railways in km/100 sq. km of area	NSI
Relative share of households with Internet access	Household access to the Internet is indicative of the propagation of new information and communication technologies in the country's districts.	2006–2014	%	NSI
Relative share of people (aged 16 to 74) who have used Internet in the past 12 months	Along with Internet access, the data on the share of people who actually used the Internet during the previous year shows the propagation and utilization of new technologies in the country's regions.	2006–2014	%	NSI
Share of roads in good condition	In addition to road network density, the quality of roads is also of considerable importance for the infrastructural profile of the districts. This indicator shows the share of roads the condition of which has been assessed as good by the Road Infrastructure Agency (RIA).	2010–2014	%	RIA

% Taxes and Fees

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Immovable property tax for legal entities	Property taxes are the biggest revenue source for municipalities. Regarding the business environment and the burden on busines, the property taxation of companies plays a major role.	2012–2015	‰	Application for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act
Vehicle tax (commercial and passenger vehicles, 74 kW to 110 kW)	Taxation on vehicles is another major revenue source for municipalities. This type of tax is a burden mainly on small companies, because the power of vehicles has been chosen so as to be most relevant for such companies.	2012–2015	BGN/kW	Application for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act
Annual license tax for retailers (up to 100 sq.m. of retail space - for most favourable location of the site)	License taxes differ from those mentioned above, and are a burden on particular businesses. The license tax for retail trade is selected as the most common and recognizable type.	2012–2015	BGN/sq.m	Application for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act
Annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities	The charge on waste collection is one of the largest revenue sources for municipalities, comparable with the revenue from taxes on real estate. This charge is often a heavy burden on businesses, and the differences between various populated areas/municipalities are significant.	2012–2015	‰	Application for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act
Local tax on the sale of immovable property	The size of the local tax on sale of property concerns both external investors and entrepreneurs entering the local market, as well as established local enterpreneurs trying to expand their operations.	2012–2015	‰	Application for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act

Administration

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Share of territory included in cadastral map	Low coverage of the cadastral map in a given district is an obstacle to investment, especially when planning the construction of new sites.	2003–2014	%	GCCA
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies	The active transparency rating of local government bodies is based on the results of an annual study by the "AIP" Foundation. The study evaluates municicpal web pages and electronic submission of requests to various administrative structures. The average score for each district is formed on the basis of the ratings of the municipalitites it consists of.	2014–2015	0–88.4 points	"AIP" Foundation
Level of development of local government e-services	The indicator represents the self-assessment of local governments regarding the degree and scope of the electronic services that they provide. Low ratings indicate a complete lack or rudimentary development of e-services, while high ratings show a capacity of carrying out two-way transactions between the administration and citizens/businesses.	2013–2015	Rating from 1 to 5	Information system for completion of reports on the state of the administration
Level of development of one-stop shop services	The indicator represents the self-assessment of local governments regarding their readiness to operate a one-stop-shop, as well as the existence of instruments for evaluation and adjustment of the service, according to the results achieved.	2013–2015	Rating from 1 to 6	Information system for completion of reports on the state of the administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Age dependency ratio (65+ to 0–14)	The indicator shows the relationship between the traditionally inactive labour market groups (less than 15 and over 65). A larger proportion of people aged below 15 outlines a trend for the future reduction of the average age of the population in the district.	2001–2014	%	NSI
Age dependency ratio (65+ to 15–64)	The age dependency ratio shows the ratio of those over 65 who are mostly inactive, and those of working age. Higher age dependency ratio indicates a deterioration of the age structure of the population affecting the labour market, economic growth, etc.	2001–2014	%	NSI
Share of urban population	The share of urban population provides information about the degree of urbanisation of the district and the concentration of population in major cities.	2001–2014	%	NSI
Population density relative to the area of the settlements and other urban areas	This density indicator gives information about the number of people per area unit. Density is influenced by changes in urban areas and the process of urbanisation of the population due to its rate of natural increase and net migration flows.	2001–2014	number of people/sq. km	NSI
Rate of natural increase	The rate of natural increase is the difference between the number of registered live births and the number of deaths during the year. The indicator shows the increase or decrease of the population of the region per 1,000 people; a positive rate is considered a favourable demographic indicator.	2001–2014	‰	NSI
Net migration rate	The net migration rate shows an increase or decrease of the population per 1,000 people due to migration. The ratios are calculated based on data of the number of persons who have changed their usual residence over the period. Net migration is the difference between immigrants and emigrants to/from a given territorial unit.	2001–2014	‰	NSI

📚 Education

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Number of students at colleges and universities per thousand people	The indicator includes students in universities, colleges and specialised higher education schools, but does not include students in vocational training after high school. The presence of a large number of students in any district increases its attractiveness and has a positive impact on the local economy.	2000–2014	number of university students/ 1,000 people	NSI
Number of teachers at primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	The relation between the number of teachers and the number of students in a given district is a standard indicator for measuring the quality and accessibility of education.	2000–2014	number of teachers/ 1,000 students	NSI
Net enrolment rate of the population (grades 5th through 8th)	The net enrolment rate of the population is calculated as a percentage of number of students in the respective stage of education in age groups relative to the number of population in the same age groups, calculated as of December 31 of the respective year. The number of students in primary and secondary education is established by October 1 of the respective year. The selection of grades 5 through 8 is based on the fact that this is the lowest educational stage that registers a relatively lower coverage of the education system.	2007–2014	%	NSI
Share of dropouts from primary and secondary education	The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education shows the number of students who prematurely left school that year. The low percentage of dropouts from primary and secondary education is a sign of a well-developed educational system and a better socioeconomic environment.	2000–2013	%	NSI
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education	The high share of population with tertiary education in a district creates conditions for increasing its competitiveness, productivity and economic growth.	2004–2014	%	NSI
Relative share of repeaters	The relative share of repeaters shows the number of students who were enrolled in the same grade for a second year in a row. This indicator shows the quality of educational institutions, at least in terms of their ability to create optimal learning conditions.	2011–2014	%	NSI
Average grades at state matriculation exams	A high grade from the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature is a sign of high quality of secondary education. Despite the varying levels of difficulty of matriculation exams over the years, their results are comparable across districts.	2008–2015	Rating 2 to 6	MEYS
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	A high percentage of students who passed the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature is a sign of high quality of secondary education. Despite the varying levels of difficulty of matriculation exams over the years, their results are comparable across districts.	2008–2015	%	MEYS

✚ Healthcare

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Population per general practitioner	GPs are usually the first point of contact in the healthcare system. The indicator for the number of people serviced by one general practitioner shows both the availability of medical staff relative to the population and the workload of doctors.	2001–2014	population/ general practitioner	NSI
Number of people per specialist in internal medicine	The proportion of physicians specialised in internal medicine relative to the population shows the scope and level of specialisation of health services provided in the district, given the high rate of incidence of diseases that are related to this speciality.	2001–2014	population/ number of specialists	NSI
Number of people per specialist in cardiology	The proportion of physicians specialised in cardiology relative to the population shows scope and level of specialisation of health services provided in the district, given the high rate of incidence of diseases that are related to this speciality.	2001–2014	population/ number of specialists	NSI
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	This indicator provides information about the morbidity of the population and the workload of general hospitals. For the purposes of the study, this indicator is used to measure the level of morbidity in the respective district – the higher its value, the higher the morbidity.	2001–2014	cases of hospitalization/ 1,000 people	NSI
Health-insured persons as share of the population	The share of persons with health insurance shows the accessibility of health services in the district; it can be used to assess the health status of the population.	2001–2014	%	NRA (request for access to information under the Access to Public Information Act)
Number of beds in general hospitals per 1,000 people	The indictor shows the number of beds in general hospitals per 1,000 people. The number of beds serves as an indicator for the material base of health care in the region.	2001–2014	number of hospital beds/ 1,000 people	NSI
Infant mortality rate	The infant mortality rate shows the number of deceased infants aged up to 1 year per 1,000 live births during the respective year. A high rate indicates both shortcomings in health care and low health culture of the local population.	2001–2014	‰	NSI

⚖️ Security and Justice

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Share of criminal cases in district courts closed in the first 3 months	The high share of criminal cases in the district courts to have been closed in the first 3 months after their being launched is indicative of a higher efficiency of local judicial bodies, other things equal.	2009–2013	%	SJC
Share of pending criminal cases in district courts	The share of pending criminal cases in district courts is used as an indicator of the efficiency of local judicial bodies.	2009–2013	%	SJC
Actual workload of penal judges in district courts	This indicator shows the actual workload of penal judges in district courts for the respective year. The higher the workload, the harder the access to the judiciary.	2010–2013	cases/ penal judge/ month	SJC
Crimes against the person per 10,000 people	The number of crimes against the person is indicative of the overall criminality in a given district. Officially recorded crimes do not always represent the actual number of crimes committed in the district, but provide a good basis for evaluation and comparison between districts.	2000–2014	number of crimes/ 10,000 people	NSI, MOI
Crimes against property per 10,000 people	The number of crimes against property is indicative of the overall criminality in a given district. Officially recorded crimes do not always represent the actual number of crimes committed in the district, but provide a good basis for evaluation and comparison between districts.	2000–2014	number of crimes/ 10,000 people	NSI, MOI

Environment

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Emissions of carbon dioxide per sq. km of the territory	Emissions of harmful substances into the atmosphere per square kilometre show how the atmosphere in the area is polluted by human activity. For the purposes of analysis, only carbon dioxide emissions were taken into account, as being in the largest volume, and at the same time – most indicative of harmful emissions. Districts with high air pollution are less attractive in terms of living conditions.	2010–2013	tonnes of carbon dioxide/ 1 sq. km. of area	NSI
Household waste collected per capita of serviced population	The amount of collected household waste is a standard measurement for the cleanliness of the environment. Since very little household waste in Bulgaria is being recycled, composted or otherwise utilised, for the purpose of the study we have accepted that the higher this indicator is, the greater danger it presents to the environment in that district.	2001–2013	kg/person/year	NSI
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to waste water treatment plants	The availability of waste water treatment plants (WWTP) suggests lower environmental pollution from sewage and higher utilisation of water resources. The larger the share of public sewerage systems, connected to WWTPs is, the cleaner the environment should be.	2009–2013	%	NSI
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems	The indicator shows the percentage of residents in a district who live in areas with public sewerage systems. The coverage of public sewerage has impact on both the social and the environmental characteristics of the regions.	2006–2013	%	NSI
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita	This indicator shows the annual expenditure of all economic agents on the aquisition and maintenance of long-term tangible and intangible assets with environmental functions.	2001–2013	BGN/capita	NSI

Culture

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Annual average number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people of the population	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities that shows the annual average number of visits to the district's theatres per 1,000 people of the local population.	2009–2014	visits/ 1,000 people	NSI
Annual average number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the population	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities that shows the annual average number of visits to the district's cinemas per 1,000 people of the local population.	2009–2014	visits/ 1,000 people	NSI
Annual average number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the population	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities that shows the annual average number of visits to the district's museums per 1,000 people of the local population.	2009–2014	visits/ 1,000 people	NSI
Annual average number of visits to libraries per 1,000 people of the population	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities that shows the annual average number of visits to the district's libraries per 1,000 people of the local population.	2009–2014	visits/ 1,000 people	NSI

Appendix

📈 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

👛 Income and Living Conditions

Indicator / District	Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, BGN (2012)	Average annual income per household member, BGN (2014)	Average annual gross salary, BGN (2013)	Relative share of population living in households with low work intensity, % (2012)	Relative share of population living in material deprivation, % (2012)	Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line, % (2012)
Blagoevgrad	7,398	4,181	6,566	4.3	31.4	15.3
Burgas	9,375	4,182	8,212	11.2	43.1	19.3
Varna	11,165	5,008	8,922	11.0	57.1	23.7
Veliko Tarnovo	7,163	4,288	7,262	15.3	52.2	15.2
Vidin	5,384	4,383	6,195	27.2	51.9	31.2
Vratsa	9,105	4,234	9,383	17.9	44.8	26.2
Gabrovo	9,025	4,787	7,912	4.5	45.8	15.2
Dobrich	7,285	4,091	7,164	9.3	30.7	20.2
Kardzhali	6,139	3,762	6,842	10.8	39.8	25.8
Kyustendil	5,915	3,966	6,880	4.8	40.5	14.6
Lovech	6,908	3,788	6,940	13.5	70.7	20.9
Montana	6,044	4,117	6,995	21.0	23.8	23.0
Pazardzhik	7,430	3,570	7,264	31.9	59.0	30.8
Pernik	5,784	5,941	6,719	6.8	54.8	22.3
Pleven	6,141	5,043	7,046	10.2	40.9	17.0
Plovdiv	8,920	4,410	7,922	10.3	46.2	19.0
Razgrad	7,452	4,000	7,533	12.8	56.5	14.7
Ruse	8,442	4,553	7,589	6.0	26.6	16.9
Silistra	5,206	3,289	6,880	3.5	40.7	17.9
Sliven	5,800	4,017	6,999	14.5	47.4	31.6
Smolyan	7,230	5,315	6,800	25.1	45.9	14.1
Sofia (Capital City)	24,023	6,890	12,851	4.8	30.3	22.0
Sofia	12,136	3,771	9,252	14.1	46.1	20.6
Stara Zagora	11,699	4,957	9,414	14.3	54.3	26.5
Targovishte	6,929	3,546	7,195	17.9	47.7	25.0
Haskovo	6,166	4,157	6,581	13.7	40.3	15.5
Shumen	6,865	4,387	7,405	16.5	52.1	18.0
Yambol	6,937	4,133	7,111	14.8	37.7	15.3

Labor Market

District	Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+, % (2014)	Annual average unemployment rate of the population, % (2014)	Annual average employment rate of the population 15+, % (2014)	Demographic replacement rate (ratio of the number of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64), % (2014)
Blagoevgrad	58.9	14.1	50.6	67.1
Burgas	54.7	11.0	48.6	66.0
Varna	54.5	8.7	49.8	66.2
Veliko Tarnovo	52.7	11.7	46.5	54.9
Vidin	49.8	22.2	38.8	51.3
Vratsa	48.3	18.1	39.5	65.4
Gabrovo	52.3	8.1	48.1	47.0
Dobrich	56.8	14.3	48.6	60.2
Kardzhali	51.5	4.9	49.0	60.6
Kyustendil	48.6	14.2	41.7	47.9
Lovech	41.1	10.2	36.9	58.6
Montana	49.0	16.3	41.0	58.9
Pazardzhik	52.8	10.4	47.3	71.4
Pernik	53.1	13.1	46.2	49.0
Pleven	46.7	9.0	42.5	58.2
Plovdiv	56.4	13.1	49.0	64.7
Razgrad	50.3	17.7	41.4	68.1
Ruse	48.3	10.8	43.1	56.6
Silistra	49.5	22.4	38.4	58.2
Sliven	48.4	13.6	41.8	77.8
Smolyan	59.6	19.4	48.0	46.6
Sofia (Capital City)	61.1	6.3	57.3	62.6
Sofia	52.3	12.7	45.7	63.4
Stara Zagora	50.1	11.0	44.6	60.4
Targovishte	45.2	11.4	40.1	67.8
Haskovo	53.0	10.4	47.5	60.0
Shumen	59.8	21.1	47.2	67.6
Yambol	52.6	15.0	44.7	57.3

🏭 Investment

District	Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people (2013)	Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita, BGN thousand (2013)	Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises, per capita, BGN thousand (2013)	Utilisation of EU operational program funds by municipalities, BGN (as of 31.01.2015)
Blagoevgrad	55	425,974	353,627	157 609,250
Burgas	67	1 886,262	2 438,309	477 280,841
Varna	66	1 129,690	1 424,058	233 104,592
Veliko Tarnovo	40	397,597	89,566	154 856,325
Vidin	32	66,755	59,324	65 204,006
Vratsa	32	292,518	157,668	159 735,869
Gabrovo	48	182,708	254,823	159 565,019
Dobrich	51	380,718	299,945	85 077,495
Kardzhali	29	106,429	112,929	97 157,210
Kyustendil	40	138,845	38,794	36 871,576
Lovech	40	155,171	134,793	131 953,161
Montana	31	153,622	38,094	79 977,771
Pazardzhik	39	332,024	460,437	148 217,817
Pernik	39	127,231	229,717	61 295,956
Pleven	36	422,544	311,089	149 504,332
Plovdiv	51	1 554,370	1 648,669	323 560,875
Razgrad	33	159,504	129,260	89 160,344
Ruse	47	440,017	372,823	70 653,245
Silistra	33	176,278	33,472	58 770,930
Sliven	35	220,372	97,402	67 498,130
Smolyan	44	141,179	76,025	52 721,659
Sofia (Capital City)	81	7 141,450	12 074,016	515 559,754
Sofia	38	444,421	1 262,892	230 838,066
Stara Zagora	44	678,226	796,980	129 386,355
Targovishte	32	319,230	208,881	56 899,061
Haskovo	47	208,511	74,285	114 546,529
Shumen	37	237,943	108,596	97 338,040
Yambol	44	169,626	53,258	76 315,103

🚌 Infrastructure

District	Road network density, km/100 sq. km	Railway network density, km/100 sq. km	Relative share of households with Internet access, %	Relative share of people (aged 16 to 74) who have used the Internet in the past 12 months, %	Share of roads in good condition, %
Indicator	(2013)	(2013)	(2014)	(2014)	(2014)
Blagoevgrad	10.3	2.5	61.9	59.6	49.1
Burgas	15.3	2.3	51.6	48.6	35.0
Varna	18.6	5.1	58.9	63.2	43.5
Veliko Tarnovo	20.1	5.1	55.0	54.2	27.7
Vidin	20.1	3.6	45.4	62.1	34.2
Vratsa	17.6	3.1	38.5	48.2	21.2
Gabrovo	24.9	3.7	64.4	63.2	41.5
Dobrich	17.5	1.3	49.6	59.3	39.3
Kardzhali	19.7	2.1	65.8	39.5	31.3
Kyustendil	19.3	4.0	39.9	46.1	46.4
Lovech	18.1	2.6	45.8	54.6	47.8
Montana	16.6	3.1	47.9	56.1	31.4
Pazardzhik	16.6	4.2	49.6	52.2	49.8
Pernik	24.1	4.8	52.8	50.8	49.5
Pleven	17.0	4.4	43.8	45.8	39.0
Plovdiv	17.1	5.4	45.0	58.4	44.5
Razgrad	19.2	3.5	59.4	71.7	33.1
Ruse	18.3	5.5	64.6	62.7	30.2
Silistra	17.8	2.5	60.2	51.9	46.7
Sliven	16.5	3.6	49.8	52.9	80.3
Smolyan	16.9	0.0	55.4	52.3	49.5
Sofia (Capital City)	0.0	13.6	69.3	77.7	0.0
Sofia	21.3	4.2	45.9	54.3	31.0
Stara Zagora	17.2	5.1	53.7	46.6	53.7
Targovishte	20.6	2.8	41.8	48.7	47.0
Haskovo	19.5	3.6	57.5	62.3	30.0
Shumen	18.1	4.6	48.2	50.6	35.1
Yambol	18.9	1.7	57.2	64.5	51.7

% Taxes and Fees

Indicator District	Immovable property tax for legal entities, ‰ (2015)	Vehicle tax (commercial and passenger vehicles, 74 kW to 110 kW), BGN/kW (2015)	Annual license tax for retailers (up to 100 sq.m. of retail space - for most favourable location of the site), BGN/m² (2015)	Annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities, ‰ (2015)	Local tax on the sale of immovable property, ‰ (2015)
Blagoevgrad	1.35	1.18	11.22	8.50	1.96
Burgas	1.59	1.54	14.60	7.77	2.57
Varna	2.00	1.52	16.54	4.89	2.62
Veliko Tarnovo	2.22	1.50	12.02	7.23	2.60
Vidin	1.64	1.13	4.53	7.97	2.55
Vratsa	1.89	1.18	6.84	7.17	2.29
Gabrovo	1.55	1.15	8.29	3.75	2.15
Dobrich	1.46	1.48	8.70	6.17	2.92
Kardzhali	1.76	1.25	8.10	10.48	2.48
Kyustendil	1.52	1.17	10.05	5.76	2.06
Lovech	2.04	1.27	10.40	10.47	2.30
Montana	1.68	1.15	5.12	6.30	2.42
Pazardzhik	1.79	1.18	9.05	11.70	2.70
Pernik	1.87	1.36	9.88	6.33	2.08
Pleven	2.75	1.16	9.24	5.13	2.77
Plovdiv	1.79	1.53	13.12	7.11	2.42
Razgrad	2.01	1.37	9.15	7.22	2.51
Ruse	1.31	1.11	13.36	5.14	2.20
Silistra	1.67	1.29	7.95	7.64	2.31
Sliven	1.48	1.25	9.80	3.23	2.69
Smolyan	1.82	1.18	7.56	8.25	2.43
Sofia (Capital City)	1.88	1.38	20.00	10.00	2.50
Sofia	1.95	1.17	8.87	9.37	2.54
Stara Zagora	1.43	1.39	13.76	4.32	2.26
Targovishte	1.38	1.36	8.88	6.81	2.23
Haskovo	1.90	1.40	12.65	9.91	2.51
Shumen	1.73	1.38	8.97	6.42	2.60
Yambol	1.87	1.39	8.20	6.96	2.55

📋 Administration

Indicator / District	Share of territory included in cadastral maps, % (2014)	Level of development of local government e-services, rating from 1 to 5 (2015)	Level of development of one-stop shop services, rating from 1 to 6 (2015)	Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies, rating from 0 to 88,4 points (2015)
Blagoevgrad	12.9	1.3	3.0	47.1
Burgas	16.3	2.3	5.1	56.4
Varna	11.9	4.2	5.6	51.5
Veliko Tarnovo	6.7	2.2	4.5	48.3
Vidin	2.1	1.0	3.3	34.7
Vratsa	7.1	3.4	5.4	53.8
Gabrovo	21.3	3.6	5.1	60.0
Dobrich	32.1	2.8	5.1	58.6
Kardzhali	3.4	1.3	3.2	37.6
Kyustendil	18.9	3.1	4.4	32.4
Lovech	74.0	2.8	5.2	53.8
Montana	12.3	2.0	4.8	41.7
Pazardzhik	26.8	2.5	4.8	46.9
Pernik	4.5	2.5	5.4	42.1
Pleven	10.0	2.6	4.7	52.4
Plovdiv	24.4	2.9	4.8	54.3
Razgrad	18.9	3.5	4.9	56.3
Ruse	10.2	1.1	5.3	54.9
Silistra	14.2	1.1	4.5	44.5
Sliven	23.0	2.9	2.9	64.4
Smolyan	32.1	2.6	3.2	41.6
Sofia (Capital City)	95.8	4.0	5.0	75.1
Sofia	12.6	1.4	3.8	35.8
Stara Zagora	15.0	3.0	4.7	52.1
Targovishte	6.0	2.4	4.4	57.2
Haskovo	3.8	2.8	4.9	47.8
Shumen	19.8	1.0	4.0	41.4
Yambol	16.6	4.2	3.7	45.7

👥 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

▥ Demography

Indicator / District	Annual average population (2014)	Age dependency ratio (65+ to 0–14), % (2014)	Age dependency ratio (65+ to 15–64), % (2014)	Share of urban population, % (2014)	Population density relative to the area of the settlements and other urban areas, people/sq. km (2014)	Rate of natural increase, ‰ (2014)	Net migration rate, ‰ (2014)
Blagoevgrad	316,843	122.3	25.6	59.6	2,376	−3.6	−4.5
Burgas	414,335	116.4	26.4	74.9	2,266	−3.2	2.5
Varna	473,940	118.8	26.0	83.8	1,830	−2.7	2.1
Veliko Tarnovo	249,454	177.8	33.5	70.0	1,126	−8.2	−5.2
Vidin	94,414	230.6	46.6	64.4	962	−15.2	−7.0
Vratsa	176,782	171.0	35.8	58.9	843	−10.8	−7.4
Gabrovo	117,311	236.1	43.0	82.0	1,346	−11.6	−4.8
Dobrich	183,744	141.2	30.3	69.1	713	−7.4	−2.8
Kardzhali	151,329	128.4	26.6	41.4	1,872	−2.6	12.1
Kyustendil	129,135	212.4	40.2	69.4	1,225	−11.4	−6.7
Lovech	134,546	192.4	41.8	62.6	918	−11.2	−4.2
Montana	140,473	188.4	40.7	64.3	989	−12.8	−3.2
Pazardzhik	267,918	129.4	29.1	62.5	2,205	−5.3	−4.9
Pernik	127,872	200.9	36.8	78.9	983	−11.2	−1.7
Pleven	257,556	182.4	39.4	66.8	1,174	−10.0	−4.0
Plovdiv	676,892	141.9	30.2	74.9	2,542	−4.3	0.5
Razgrad	119,821	141.9	29.4	47.2	905	−7.6	−5.3
Ruse	228,735	178.4	33.6	77.4	1,759	−8.5	−0.7
Silistra	115,354	163.5	34.3	44.8	840	−8.4	−3.4
Sliven	193,284	102.4	28.9	66.1	2,759	−2.5	−4.1
Smolyan	115,101	177.9	29.9	55.3	1,973	−7.8	−11.6
Sofia (Capital City)	1313,095	121.8	23.7	95.5	4,904	−1.2	6.5
Sofia	239,469	162.8	34.2	61.3	768	−9.1	−2.7
Stara Zagora	327,034	146.3	32.5	72.0	1,546	−7.0	0.5
Targovishte	117,069	137.5	30.8	54.1	1,131	−6.7	−4.4
Haskovo	238,488	154.2	32.8	72.5	1,106	−8.0	1.0
Shumen	177,493	135.8	29.4	62.4	914	−6.3	−0.1
Yambol	126,450	155.9	35.7	70.3	1,157	−7.6	−3.8

Education

District	Number of students at colleges and universities (2014)	Number of teachers at primary and secondary schools (2014)	Number of students at primary and secondary schools (2014)	Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education, % (2014)	Net enrolment rate of the population (grades 5th through 8th), % (2014)	Relative share of repeaters, % (2014)	Share of dropouts from primary and secondary education, % (2013)	Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams , % (2015)	Average grades at state matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature (2015)
Blagoevgrad	13,179	2,564	34,845	19.6	82.9	0.9	1.6	6.1	4.24
Burgas	8,974	3,071	46,666	18.8	78.5	1.1	2.0	7.1	4.22
Varna	30,886	3,403	49,467	33.8	73.5	1.6	2.7	5.2	4.37
Veliko Tarnovo	27,020	1,726	24,644	27.3	78.7	0.9	3.2	6.2	4.24
Vidin	0	717	9,595	17.2	78.4	1.1	2.5	6.1	4.22
Vratsa	774	1,408	19,083	22.1	85.0	1.2	2.7	7.7	4.12
Gabrovo	6,226	757	10,495	26.3	77.6	1.1	2.2	6.6	4.23
Dobrich	890	1,483	18,811	18.4	76.4	2.4	4.0	2.9	4.26
Kardzhali	1,017	1,284	15,913	19.8	78.3	0.5	1.9	11.4	4.06
Kyustendil	0	907	12,142	23.7	78.3	0.9	1.8	10.0	4.07
Lovech	238	1,063	14,972	18.6	80.0	0.9	3.4	6.2	4.26
Montana	0	1,130	15,122	17.1	80.5	1.4	3.3	10.7	4.04
Pazardzhik	0	2,159	28,953	15.3	78.9	1.6	3.3	6.6	4.21
Pernik	294	842	11,556	17.8	76.7	1.2	1.8	8.1	4.12
Pleven	1,892	2,054	27,665	23.6	82.9	1.8	2.8	10.2	4.01
Plovdiv	40,563	4,823	68,745	25.1	78.8	2.3	2.8	7.0	4.31
Razgrad	337	1,015	13,573	16.2	85.2	1.6	3.1	12.9	3.88
Ruse	9,498	1,598	21,961	23.6	78.7	1.1	2.4	5.2	4.21
Silistra	507	849	11,851	14.4	78.7	0.8	3.0	9.0	3.88
Sliven	896	1,482	22,954	22.5	75.0	2.3	4.6	5.9	4.18
Smolyan	1,857	952	10,575	21.0	82.4	0.3	0.4	2.5	4.37
Sofia (Capital City)	108,709	8,950	122,141	48.6	74.8	0.7	0.8	1.8	4.63
Sofia	4,964	1,830	25,084	15.7	78.9	2.0	2.2	10.7	4.09
Stara Zagora	5,066	2,519	36,231	21.8	80.8	2.2	2.5	5.8	4.19
Targovishte	0	918	12,246	17.3	81.6	1.4	4.3	4.4	4.06
Haskovo	289	1,723	24,891	19.2	80.5	1.4	2.5	9.2	4.14
Shumen	7,388	1,488	19,364	24.2	81.3	1.1	2.7	6.7	4.05
Yambol	872	928	14,511	23.7	83.5	1.4	2.0	15.6	3.98

Healthcare

Indicator / District	Number of beds in general hospitals per 1,000 people	Number of people per general practitioner	Number of people per specialist in Internal Medicine	Number of people per specialist in Cardiology	Infant mortality rate, ‰	Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	Health-insured persons as share of the population, %
	(2014)	(2014)	(2014)	(2014)	(2014)	(2014)	(2014)
Blagoevgrad	3.2	1,584	6,601	11,735	6.4	143	86.3
Burgas	3.0	1,883	7,023	9,207	8.1	102	83.8
Varna	3.6	1,534	6,771	4,388	5.1	170	83.8
Veliko Tarnovo	3.2	1,720	7,337	7,337	4.1	149	83.1
Vidin	3.8	1,311	6,294	7,868	10.6	166	89.8
Vratsa	4.6	1,593	5,357	11,049	8.7	191	88.6
Gabrovo	5.2	1,524	5,586	7,821	1.3	246	94.0
Dobrich	2.7	1,382	8,750	9,671	6.4	135	84.6
Kardzhali	4.0	2,259	10,809	10,089	6.3	165	101.5
Kyustendil	5.1	1,451	7,174	9,224	6.1	165	92.1
Lovech	4.1	1,447	5,850	7,475	8.4	213	89.7
Montana	5.1	1,405	7,024	12,770	9.3	261	87.4
Pazardzhik	5.5	1,558	4,784	9,923	8.1	153	83.6
Pernik	2.3	1,541	4,262	15,984	5.3	99	88.6
Pleven	6.7	1,263	6,778	4,365	8.5	236	89.5
Plovdiv	6.8	1,567	5,372	5,207	8.3	242	87.2
Razgrad	4.5	2,349	5,706	23,964	9.6	227	90.3
Ruse	3.7	2,061	9,531	5,865	8.5	163	87.1
Silistra	3.9	1,955	11,535	23,071	12.0	205	86.0
Sliven	4.4	1,741	10,173	8,054	15.4	154	85.6
Smolyan	4.6	1,621	6,058	9,592	2.7	212	91.6
Sofia (Capital City)	4.7	1,522	6,699	3,839	5.3	153	85.9
Sofia	5.0	1,761	6,652	6,140	10.6	249	86.0
Stara Zagora	4.7	1,404	6,541	6,412	9.7	146	89.0
Targovishte	4.9	2,209	7,317	23,414	6.5	251	86.9
Haskovo	3.3	1,656	6,446	9,540	12.1	188	87.3
Shumen	3.0	1,628	10,441	6,339	11.7	152	88.1
Yambol	3.1	1,642	9,032	5,269	9.7	139	89.9

⚖ Security and Justice

District	Share of criminal cases in the district court closed in the first 3 months, % (2013)	Share of pending criminal cases in the district court, % (2013)	Actual workload of penal judges in the district court, cases/judge/month (2013)	Number of registered crimes against the person (2014)	Number of registered crimes against property (2014)
Blagoevgrad	80.0	13.5	7.3	167	1,916
Burgas	90.0	7.3	7.7	305	4,856
Varna	91.0	8.3	7.7	328	5,590
Veliko Tarnovo	94.0	7.4	6.3	95	1,640
Vidin	90.0	10.0	5.6	51	837
Vratsa	95.0	3.0	6.3	122	1,522
Gabrovo	96.0	7.6	6.6	49	974
Dobrich	91.0	7.2	6.0	137	1,652
Kardzhali	99.0	3.8	6.6	34	459
Kyustendil	82.0	10.6	9.9	88	1,291
Lovech	96.0	6.1	6.8	60	684
Montana	91.0	10.3	5.1	122	891
Pazardzhik	94.0	6.9	7.4	125	1,577
Pernik	89.0	10.1	4.4	57	1,210
Pleven	96.0	5.3	7.7	161	2,384
Plovdiv	95.0	5.4	8.2	339	4,730
Razgrad	93.0	8.7	6.2	85	557
Ruse	98.0	3.1	6.6	94	1,949
Silistra	86.0	6.4	6.6	40	463
Sliven	93.0	9.3	9.4	134	1,439
Smolyan	96.0	6.7	6.2	21	337
Sofia (Capital City)	81.0	10.6	15.0	923	19,095
Sofia	83.0	9.2	6.9	172	1,971
Stara Zagora	85.0	9.5	8.4	203	2,434
Targovishte	94.0	9.6	3.5	73	575
Haskovo	92.0	7.2	10.1	116	1,610
Shumen	93.0	6.5	7.3	116	854
Yambol	89.0	10.3	6.3	58	825

Environment

District	Emissions of carbon dioxide, tonnes per sq. km of the territory (2013)	Household waste collected per capita of serviced population, kg/year (2013)	Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, % (2013)	Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to waste water treatment plants, % (2013)	Expenditure on environmental protection, BGN thousand (2013)
Blagoevgrad	16.6	321	77.48	26.5	56,902
Burgas	90.2	519	75.99	61.2	319,630
Varna	974.3	585	86.21	86.2	161,148
Veliko Tarnovo	148.6	452	66.63	44.5	39,564
Vidin	142.9	315	56.57	0.0	13,154
Vratsa	91.4	283	55.60	32.4	153,462
Gabrovo	30.7	424	85.19	66.8	17,507
Dobrich	5.2	485	70.83	70.8	21,220
Kardzhali	5.1	411	44.08	3.9	25,648
Kyustendil	668.9	448	74.08	60.8	23,697
Lovech	93.8	426	63.95	41.1	33,553
Montana	6.5	304	58.72	34.2	37,483
Pazardzhik	37.9	415	70.10	27.3	49,562
Pernik	250.9	584	79.16	74.2	54,721
Pleven	52.8	312	56.58	41.2	24,099
Plovdiv	127.6	496	79.64	54.6	114,762
Razgrad	54.6	450	41.82	41.8	21,322
Ruse	208.3	467	67.73	64.2	41,151
Silistra	13.1	433	51.59	0.6	8,263
Sliven	161.0	502	65.23	57.6	19,977
Smolyan	4.8	386	69.23	39.3	16,229
Sofia (Capital City)	1,073.5	533	96.30	96.1	535,722
Sofia	41.7	319	75.70	29.3	118,546
Stara Zagora	3,405.1	432	71.34	61.2	86,246
Targovishte	92.5	308	56.05	44.1	11,260
Haskovo	203.5	299	71.50	46.9	38,846
Shumen	29.2	348	59.48	44.8	38,938
Yambol	63.8	335	70.28	3.6	16,294

Culture

Indicator District	Number of visits to theatres, thousand (2014)	Number of visits to cinemas, thousand (2014)	Number of visits to libraries, thousand (2014)	Number of visits to museums, thousand (2014)
Blagoevgrad	39.4	97.4	99	88.3
Burgas	149.7	384.1	59	203.4
Varna	110.9	565.5	166	172.8
Veliko Tarnovo	30.5	117.4	443	475.1
Vidin	32.3	13.0	64	110.6
Vratsa	49.3	3.0	95	33.9
Gabrovo	46.8	17.0	54	296.3
Dobrich	47.9	23.0	58	197.6
Kardzhali	19.8	0.0	44	14.1
Kyustendil	18.9	26.0	43	107.9
Lovech	16.7	0.0	59	115.3
Montana	11.4	0.0	39	39.7
Pazardzhik	43.7	0.0	69	162.3
Pernik	7.0	0.0	41	43.7
Pleven	35.6	100.0	80	183.0
Plovdiv	202.5	547.0	177	237.5
Razgrad	34.5	3.0	79	40.7
Ruse	130.2	176.0	155	81.8
Silistra	21.7	8.0	47	20.7
Sliven	67.7	18.0	148	94.4
Smolyan	8.0	16.0	23	41.6
Sofia (Capital City)	852.0	2,706.0	1,469	921.8
Sofia	0.0	15.0	0	501.0
Stara Zagora	117.3	210.0	149	371.8
Targovishte	59.3	1.0	90	20.8
Haskovo	52.6	11.0	75	32.1
Shumen	43.5	24.0	133	141.4
Yambol	53.3	17.0	48	31.7