

# Dobrich

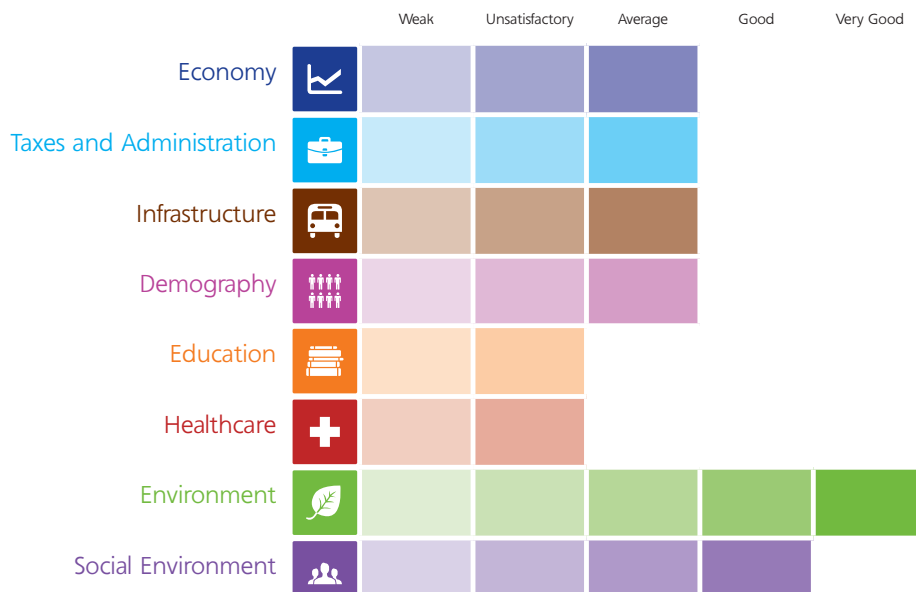
**Population (2012)**  
**Area (sq. km)**  
**Number of settlements**  
**Share of urban population (%)**

187 223  
 4 719,7  
 215  
 69,0



## Overview

The general condition of Dobrich District cannot be described as good. GDP per capita is only 69% of the national average of BGN 9,359. Unemployment remains relatively high despite the marked revitalisation of the labour market in 2012. Household incomes are rising, but the companies show no optimism for the future. The district has one of the most developed agricultural sectors in the country, generating nearly a quarter of all company revenues in the district. Mostly grain is grown, which also brings some negatives. Grain production does not create many jobs, and to some extent is the cause of nitrate pollution. The population in the district has been decreasing at a faster rate than the national average, but still maintains a relatively positive age structure. Education and health are inadequate. The rate of enrolment in schools has declined, while the number of dropouts is still high. In terms of medical services, there is a pressing need for specialists. Nearly 40% of those in need of treatment in the past 12 months have sought such treatment outside the district. The district has potential for development, but there is a need for bolder reforms in the business environment.



## Economy

Dobrich is ahead of 17 other districts on GDP per capita; it achieved BGN 6,445 for 2010, or 69% of the national average. Dobrich is among the districts which experienced relatively rapid growth of the economy in 2010 compared to 2009. The number of companies has increased compared to the pre-crisis year of 2008. Despite the contraction in investment activity and the withdrawal of part of the foreign investment in the district, the labour market began to recover in 2012. The employment rate of persons aged 15 and over reached 46.4% and is close to the average for Bulgaria. The unemployment rate decreased to 15.4% in 2012, at 17.3% one year earlier. The economic improvement in the district is evident from the growth of income per capita, which reached BGN 3,856 for 2012, or 89% of the national average, against BGN 2,994 and 79% of the national average a year earlier. The economic structure of the district is different from that of the country as a whole because of the significant share of the agriculture: 15.5%. The services sector produced less than two-thirds of the value added in the district, with the remainder being accounted for by industry. Despite the large share of the agricultural sector, it generates only 2.8% of the jobs in the district. The reason for this is the dominant share of grain production, which is characterised by a high degree of mechanisation, and the need for labour is very small. The second position is occupied by subsectors such as tobacco, vegetable-growing and livestock rearing that require more manual labour.

Municipal administrations in Dobrich District cope reasonably well with the absorption of EU funds. The disbursed funds are nearly BGN 197 per capita, which is BGN 28 above the national average.

Judging by the plans of surveyed companies for the next 12 months (from June 2013 to May 2014), the economy of the district is facing stagnation, and may even report a decrease. Nearly one-third of businesses expect for revenue from their activities to decrease, and only 15% expect improvement. 22% said they expected to make more investments, while 28% intend to cut their investment activity. There are very meagre expectations for job creation, while 15% of respondents are likely to lay off workers.

## Taxes and Administration

Dobrich received medium scores in the "Taxes and Administration" category. The district fails in implementing active tax policies to facilitate entrepreneurship. While the tax rates on real estate owned by companies, the license tax for retail and the garbage charge for companies are below the national average, others, such as vehicle tax and property transfer tax, are higher.

The administration's performance was rated as "average". Business surveys show relatively expedient work of the bureaucratic apparatus. On all other criteria, such as the qualifications and responsiveness of staff, clear requirements and incorruptibility of the local administration, the results are average. From the municipalities that provided information, only Dobrich (the city) stated it is completely prepared to provide citizens and businesses with one-stop-shop services. This is also the municipality providing the most modern and most diverse electronic services. About 25% of surveyed business representatives responded they had used electronic services in the period May 2013 – May 2014. The rating given to their quality is among the highest in the country - 4.0/5.0, at a national average of 3.5/5.0.

Some aspects of the operation of the judiciary are also problematic. As in most districts in the country, justice is not praised for its speed. One in five respondents who was a party to a lawsuit in the last 36 months had serious doubts about the probity of the judiciary.

## Infrastructure

In spite of its location on the border with Romania, Dobrich District is still cut off from the main transport links in the country. The only first-class road in the district is the one along the Black Sea coast, which is far from the district centre, and connects the city of Varna with the city of Constanta. However, the quality of the remaining road network is relatively good: 46% of the road surface is in good condition compared to an average of 40.3% for the country. The overall density of the road network is low, and the density of railways is among the lowest in the country, at 1.3 km per 100 sq. km.

Losses in the transport of water are still a very serious problem for the district. As part of the implementation of an integrated water project for Balchik, a new waste water treatment plant was constructed, 39 km of primary and secondary water mains were completely renovated, as well as 28 km of sewerage network; 24 km of open and 15 km of covered water mains were rehabilitated. The successful completion of the integrated project to improve the water sector in the municipality of Dobrich is expected to reduce losses in the water transport network to nearly one-half of their present value: down to 36%.

Efforts are being made to close the gap in the district on the share of households with Internet access. In 2012, these reached 49.7%, almost touching the average for the country.

## Demographics

The population of Dobrich District was 186,357 people in 2012. The demographic crisis has affected the district more than the country as a whole. Over the period 2001-2012, the population in the district decreased by over 13%, while the national percentage is 8.2%. The natural rate of increase is below the national average, reaching -6.8‰ in 2012, at -4.5‰ in 2001. Negative values are also reported for another important indicator, the net migration rate, which shows the difference between the number of people who moved into and those who moved out of the district. The number of people who moved out of Dobrich District in 2012 was 2,463. Most of them moved to the city of Varna, Sofia (capital city), or emigrated abroad.

The district is one of the most sparsely populated in the country, and the degree of urbanisation is below average.

Despite the negative trends, the age dependency ratio of the population is relatively favourable in comparison with others in the country.

## Education

According to the quality of education, Dobrich District is ranked among the worst performers in the country. There are several major problems. Over the last six years, there has been a continuous decline in the enrolment rate in grades 5th through 8th: while it was one of the highest in 2007, it equalled the national average by 2012. The relative share of repeaters has also increased. Although the proportion of dropouts from primary and secondary education has progressively declined over the past 12 years, it still remains well above the national average. Another troubling indicator is the significant increase in the percentage of "fail" scores (below 3.00) at the state matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature this year. Since the introduction of the matriculation exams, students have maintained a nearly constant average grade of 4.3, which is equal to the national average.

At the same time, Dobrich District has a relatively good performance in terms of both the number of population per school, and in terms of the number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students. These indications point to a relatively high quality of education in the district.

The proportion of the population with tertiary education is rather low (18.3%). However, the tourism college stands out with its level of activity, and is partnering with both Bulgarian and foreign employers. This allows for trainee programmes, with quite a few of the graduates starting employment in their specialty outside Bulgaria.

## Healthcare

The quality of health services in Dobrich District is rated as unsatisfactory. While indicators on general practitioners in the district are in line with the national average, the situation with specialist doctors is not the same. There is a very serious shortage of cardiologists and specialists in Internal Medicine. Also unsatisfactory is the number of hospital beds per 1,000 population.

The district has one of the worst rates of infant mortality in the country: 11.2 per 1,000, at the national average of 7.8. The number of persons with valid health insurance is relatively low.

Due to the problems in healthcare, 41% of the people who used health care services in the past 12 months (ending May 2013) had to seek treatment outside the district. Over half of this "healthcare tourism" was due to the lack of specialists in the district. 23% of health service users in the past 12 months said they had had to make unofficial payments for the treatment received.

## Environment

The condition of the environment in Dobrich District is rated as very good. The share of the population with access to public sewerage connected to waste water treatment plants is relatively high when compared with the national average. The carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere are extremely low. As a whole, air pollution by harmful substances is almost non-existent.

Nitrate pollution caused by intensive land use constitutes a problem to some extent. High nitrate contamination of groundwater was registered in Shabla, Kavarna, and Krushari. The main reason for this are the nitrogen fertilizers extensively used in the agricultural sector.

## Social Environment

The general life satisfaction in Dobrich District is about average for the country. People are satisfied mainly with housing conditions, education, and health. The quality of the environment also receives a relatively good score. Probably due to the agricultural profile of the district, the number of people living in material deprivation is relatively low, and so is the proportion of the poor against the official poverty line in the district. On the other hand, this can be seen as a sign of the district's economic weakness.

Crime in Dobrich District declined in recent years, judging from the recorded crimes against the person and against property. By 2012 it was below the national average. However, confidence in the police force is rather low.

There is definitely a deficit of cultural events. The average annual number of visits to the theatre and cinema of the district's population is four times lower than the national average.

Quite indicative of the quality of life in the district is that 39% of its surveyed residents said they were prepared to move elsewhere if they had the opportunity.

## Key indicators for the district of Dobrich

Indicators / year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5 803	5 377	6 445	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	49,0	45,7	43,9	43,7	46,4
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	9,7	12,9	16,4	17,3	15,4
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	16,3	21,4	19,6	n.a.	n.a.
Age dependency ratio, 65+ to 15-64 (%)	23,6	24,0	24,7	27,1	27,9
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-4,3	-4,6	-5,9	-5,7	-6,8
Net migration rate (‰)	-3,9	-4,4	-5,6	-3,7	-2,5
Relative share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	16,8	16,7	17,9	18,4	18,3
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams (%)	4,2	6,4	3,9	2,6	3,2
Average grade at state matriculation exams	4,3	4,2	4,3	4,4	4,2
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	47,89	45,15	46,00
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	25,1	20,0	24,1	36,2	49,7
Share of the population with access to public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	67,1	67,4	67,7	69,4	n.a.
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	83,7	87,6	83,9	86,6	85,4
Infant mortality rate (‰)	9,2	12,8	14,2	8,7	11,2
Number of registered crimes per 1,000 persons of the population	13,2	15,1	14,5	13,0	12,6