

Targovishte

Population (2012)	119 317
Area (sq. km)	2 558,5
Number of settlements	199
Share of urban population (%)	54,2



Overview

Targovishte is one of the relatively poor districts, with a GDP per capita equal to 59% of the national average. The income per household member reached two-thirds of the average for Bulgaria.

Although the district of Targovishte enjoys a favourable business environment, its economy is dependent on a small number of industrial enterprises. Jobs and investment activities in the district are directly dependent on a handful of major companies. Economic activity is weak, which reflects negatively on employment, and respectively on unemployment.

This situation can be explained by the small area of the district and the fact that its population is less than 120,000 people, the low level of education and worsening demographic structure. The poor quality of road infrastructure is another obstacle to economic development.

Especially problematic is the quality of health care, which is one of the lowest in the country.

The district also suffers from other drawbacks related to the infrastructure and the quality of the environment, particularly water, sewerage, and the absence of waste water treatment plants.



Economy

Targovishte is one of the relatively poor districts in Bulgaria, with a GDP per capita equal to 59% of the national average for 2010. Overall, entrepreneurial activity is low; the number of non-financial companies per 1,000 population was 31, at 50 average for the country. There are several major industrial enterprises in the district and these account for most of the foreign investments attracted and the expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets. Trakya Glass Bulgaria, the largest employer in the district, continues to expand its activities. By the end of 2013, the construction of a second production line at the flat glass factory and a second furnace for the production of hollow glass should be completed this is expected to open 300 new jobs in the district. In 2012, unemployment in Targovishte District increased to 15.6%, or more than three percentage points above the national average. Employment of the population aged 15 and over was low (42.5%) at an average of 46.6% for the country.

The absence of any significant economic activity is the reason for the low income levels in the district. The income per household member increased to BGN 2,924 in 2012, which is 67.6% of the national average.

As elsewhere in north-eastern Bulgaria, the agricultural sector plays a major role in the structure of the local economy. Agriculture accounts for nearly 13% of the total production in the district. The main resources are concentrated in grain production and industrial crops, while the share of permanent crops and livestock is too small. The district has not yet used its potential in developing a well-diversified agricultural sector with high value added and job-generating capacity.

Local administration is doing well with the absorption of funds under EU operational programmes. The funds disbursed under operational programmes reached BGN 315 per capita at the end of 2012, which is a high achievement compared to the national average.

Taxes and Administration

Targovishte District has been providing excellent business conditions for years now, according to various rankings prepared by the Institute for Market Economics. In this edition, the district ranks second on this indicator after Yambol District. The main advantage provided by Targovishte District is the relatively low tax burden at the local level. All taxes and charges that are important for companies, such as the waste collection charge, real estate tax for companies, license tax for retail trade and property transfer tax are lower than the national average.

For the second year in a row, businesses have reported extremely low perceptions of corruption in the administration and the private sector. The rating given by companies to the performance of local authorities has dropped in value. On most indicators, such as speed of service, qualifications of staff and responsiveness, average scores prevail. On the background of the country average, however, the results are rather good.

Unlike most other districts in the country, local companies in Targovishte are rather optimistic. One-third of the companies surveyed expect revenue growth in the next 12 months (May 2013 – May 2014). The same share of companies are planning to increase their investment activity during the year, and 28% are likely to hire new workers.

Infrastructure

The quality of infrastructure in Targovishte District is assessed as unsatisfactory. Despite the relatively good road network density, two-thirds of it is third-class roads, over 20% constitutes second-class roads, and 15% are first-class roads. The E-772 international route connecting the capital city of Sofia and Varna passes through the district. Although the quality of the road surface is well above the national average - 58% of the roads in the district are classified as having a good surface (at 40.3% average in Bulgaria), access from various parts of the district to the district centre of Targovishte and the regional centre of Varna is difficult. About 80% of the population of the district needs to travel between 90 minutes and two hours to get to Varna, and about 55% of the settlements in the district are more than a 30-minute drive away from the district centre. The density of the railway network is relatively low, but lines are double and electrified for the entire length of railway crossing the district.

The territory of Targovishte district has the potential for the development of civil aviation, although in 1999 the civil airport was closed. Water supply in the district is problematic and there are still settlements with water rationing. Water losses in the water supply network are significant and major investment is required to improve the situation.

Local households' access to the Internet is one of the lowest in the country: 38.3% at 51% average. Accordingly, the share of people using the Internet is lower, too. Low penetration of the Internet in households in the district can be attributed to the low level of urbanisation.

Demographics

Targovishte is the least populated district with 118,769 residents at the end of 2012. The number of residents has been shrinking at a markedly faster pace than the country's population as a whole. Over the past 12 years, it declined by nearly 14%, compared with an average of 8.2% for Bulgaria. The rate of natural increase is negative (-6‰ for 2012, and still on the decrease). The net migration rate (the difference between inbound and outbound migration) in the district is also negative, but the intense emigration of 2007-2010 has somewhat decreased in recent years, as a result of which the net migration rate slowed down to -3.1‰ in 2012 at -9.5‰ two years earlier.

The age dependency ratio of the population over 65 to the population 14 yrs. of age or younger and to the working age population is at or below the national average, but is constantly growing.

Targovishte is one of the least urbanised districts in the country; its urban population is 54% of the total population. The population density is also significantly below the national average.

Education

Despite the closure of more than one-third of the schools over the last 12 years, the number of schools in Targovishte remains one of the highest in the country, relative to the population. The net enrolment rate of students in grades 5th through 8th is among the highest in the country. On the other hand, there has been an increase in the share of dropouts from primary and secondary education; it reached 4.7%, the highest rate in the country. The average score from the state matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature between 2008 and 2013 remained in a narrow range between 3.9 (6.0 being the highest score) and 4.1. Significant improvement was observed in the share of "fail" scores at the state exam; these declined rapidly in recent years from 13.2% in 2009 to 4.5% in 2013.

Targovishte District is lagging in terms of university graduates per capita; at present, 18% of the working age population has tertiary education, at 24% average for the country.

Healthcare

The state of healthcare in Targovishte is in poor condition. Although there is still enough hospital infrastructure in terms of the number of beds in multi-profile hospitals per 1,000 people, health facilities suffer from a severe lack of general and specialized staff. The number of general practitioners relative to the population is the third lowest in the country. The situation is similar in terms of the number of cardiologists; one specialist is in charge of nearly 9,178 people, compared with an average of 5,263 for the country. The situation with specialists in internal medicine is even worse; one doctor serves nearly 20,000 people, compared to about 6,400 average for the country. Nevertheless, relatively few people travelled outside the district to receive treatment: 15% of those who sought medical care in the past 12 months (May 2012 – May 2013).

Another worrying indicator is the infant mortality rate: 9 per 1,000 children in 2012 compared to 5.6 per 1,000 children a year earlier.

Environment

The environmental indicators are also not very favourable. Although the share of the population with access to sewerage connected to waste water treatment plants is rapidly rising, it is still lower than the national average. Also very low is the proportion of the population living in settlements with public sewerage: 55.6%, at an average of 74% for the country.

The quality of ambient air is relatively good. Carbon dioxide emissions are among the lowest in the country. Fine particle pollution is reported, mainly in the cold season, due to residential heating.

One of the major problems for the district in terms of the environment and the water and sewerage infrastructure is the lack of public sewerage in many residential areas and the widespread water rationing regimes. Groundwater is subjected to partial nitrate pollution due to nitrogen fertilization used in agriculture.

Social Environment

The general satisfaction with life in Targovishte District is slightly above average, according to the results of surveys among the population. People are largely satisfied with their social life, the quality of their own health, education, housing and security in the district. The number of recorded crimes against the person and against property per 1,000 people is one of the lowest in the country.

The relatively high percentage of the population living in material deprivation emerges as a problem; it is directly related to the high proportion of people in households with low work intensity (one in five). Nearly two-thirds of surveyed citizens are dissatisfied with their standard of living, compared to 19% who are satisfied. The greatest dissatisfaction among the population is caused by the quality of infrastructure: 89% of respondents describe it as “poor”.

Key indicators for the district of Targovishte

Indicators / year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5 415	5 056	5 513	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	43,1	45,6	44,0	45,7	42,5
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	10,8	9,9	11,7	12,4	15,6
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	21,6	19,2	17,3	n.a.	n.a.
Age dependency ratio, 65+ to 15-64 (%)	25,4	25,7	26,1	28,3	29,0
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-5,1	-4,3	-4,9	-5,7	-6,0
Net migration rate (‰)	-6,6	-7,7	-9,5	-3,7	-3,1
Relative share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	13,9	16,0	13,1	15,2	17,9
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams (%)	8,2	13,2	11,2	8,7	7,6
Average grade at state matriculation exams	4,1	4,0	3,9	4,0	4,0
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	55,0	54,2	58,0
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	22,2	21,0	20,2	24,3	38,3
Share of the population with access to public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	0	0	12,0	44,1	n.a.
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	84,3	87,2	83,8	87,9	86,9
Infant mortality rate (‰)	16,1	11,0	14,0	5,6	9,1
Number of registered crimes per 1,000 persons of the population	12,3	12,7	13,3	10,3	9,6