

Pernik



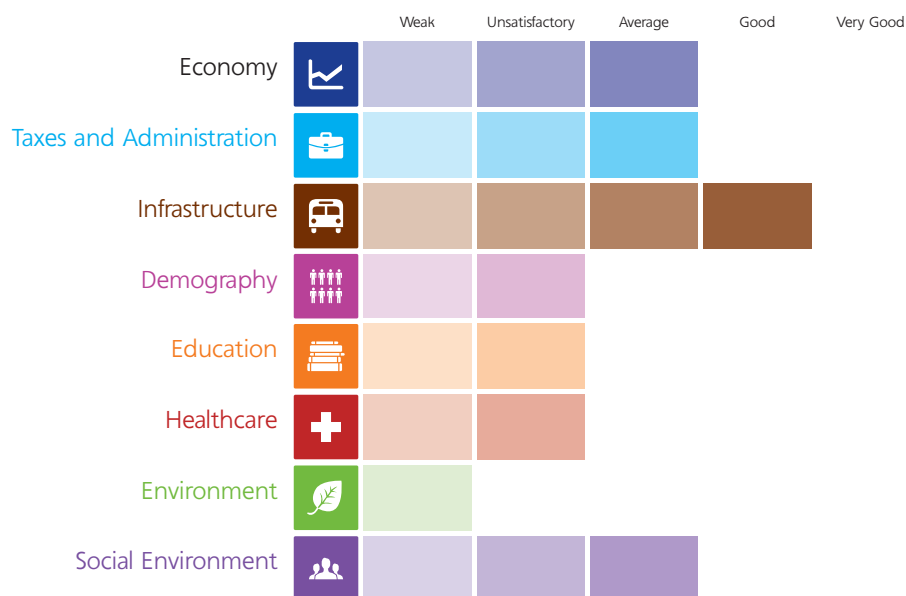
Population (2013)	129 468
Area (sq. km.)	2 394.2
Number of settlements	172
Share of urban population (%)	78.9

Overview

The socioeconomic development of Pernik District has been largely affected by the proximity to Sofia (capital). The latter has a positive influence on investment activities in the district, the workforce employment rate and the level of the population's incomes.

Simultaneously, Pernik District has received a good grade only in the field of infrastructure, which is due to the Lyulin Highway, opened in 2011, and the relatively high share of roads in a good state and the high road network density respectively. The demographic state of the district has continually deteriorated – it has the most unfavourable indicators in some respects in Bulgaria. The district's grades on local education and healthcare have also remained unsatisfactory.

Pernik District has received its lowest assessment in the Environment category owing to both the relatively high level of air pollution and the low assessment of the local population in terms of its environment. The district has got average grades in the Social Environment and Taxes and Administration categories.



Economy

Since 2006, the annual average income per household member in Pernik District has been higher than its national counterpart – it was 5,764 BGN in 2013, the average rate being 4,814 BGN concerning Bulgaria. A steady increase in the difference between the rate thereof and the country's average has been noted for this period of time – from 2.78% in 2006 it reached 19.73% in 2013. The main reason for high incomes, given the district's nearly poor macroeconomic indicators, is the high number of daily migrant workers from the district to the capital.

The situation of the labour market in Pernik aggravated in 2013 following a period of stabilisation in 2011 and 2012. The annual average unemployment rate increased more than five percentage points to 13.0%, and the employment rate decreased by 1.3 percentage points to 45.5%.

In 2012, expenditure on acquisition of fixed tangible assets remained three times less the ones in 2008. During the hardest years of the economic crisis, there was no serious outflow of foreign investments. There has not been any trend of a sustainable increase of investors' interest either.

As at 31 January 2014, the municipalities of Pernik District have managed to draw down 50.5 m BGN as beneficiaries under the EU operational programmes. 390 BGN per capita have been utilised since Bulgaria entered the EU compared to the national average of 378 BGN per capita. The reference by municipalities shows that more than 95% of funds have been utilised by the municipalities of Pernik and Radomir while the municipality of Kovachevtsi has not received any payments under European Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund.

Taxes and administration

In 2014, the local businesses' assessment of the performance of local administration was among the lowest – 2.9/5.0 in comparison with the national average of 3.1/5.0. Sofia District, Blagoevgrad District and Sofia (capital) have had lower assessments. Businesses' main remarks are in respect of the clarity of administrative requirements and the rapidity of providing services.

The municipalities of Pernik District received the second lowest transparency rating by the "Access to Information Program" Foundation following the one for the municipalities in Kyustendil District. The municipality of Zemen has received the lowest grade (15.7 points out of 82.4) within the district and the municipality of Breznik – the highest (52.4/82.4). Corruption perceptions have remained relatively high, but the district has improved its results relative to previous years.

The bigger part of the district's favourable results have been due to the relatively low levels of local taxes and charges. The sharp decrease in the household waste charge for non-residential properties of legal entities in the municipality of Breznik draws attention. It has been decreased twice from 2012 to 2014, reaching 5.0‰ from 12.0‰ in 2012.

Infrastructure

Pernik District features a road network density that is 34% higher than its national average counterpart and railway network density that is 24% higher than the country's average. In 2012, the road network density was 23.7 km per hundred km of territory – only the district of Gabrovo featured a higher density (24.9 km per hundred sq. km). The road network density in the district increased by 0.9 km per sq. km in 2011 when the Lyulin Highway was officially commissioned.

According to the Road Infrastructure Agency's data, about 48.9% of the district's roads were in a good condition compared to the country's average of 39.6%. Nevertheless, citizens and businesses have given lower grades than their national counterparts with regard to the infrastructural development of the district.

The internet access has continued to be relatively limited. In 2013, 48.4% of households had such access in comparison with the country's average of 53.7%. In Southwest Bulgaria, this share has been lower only in Sofia District – 44.1%. Exactly 50% of the citizens of Pernik District, aged 16–74, have used the internet in the past 12 months, the country's average being 56.2%.

Demographics

Some key demographics in Pernik District have rapidly aggravated in recent years. The trend has reversed following positive net migration rates from 2005 to 2007 – 2013 was the fourth successive year featuring negative values. The rate of natural increase of Pernik District's population has also remained negative – its value has been twice as high as its national counterpart since 2008.

Pernik is very near to be among the few districts where the ratio of the population aged 65+ to the one aged 0-14 is more than two to one. In 2013, the coefficient of demographic replacement, which demonstrates the ratio of the number of the population aged 15–19 to the one aged 60–64, dropped to 48.4% representing the fourth poorest value in Bulgaria.

The relative share of the population living in towns and cities has been the only demographic indicator from those studied on which the district has performed well compared to the country's average – 78.9% in 2013 compared to Bulgaria's average of 73.0%.

Education

A number of negative trends have been observed in the field of school education. The net enrolment rate of the population (grades 5th through 8th) has decreased since the 2007/2008 school year, reaching 77.0% in the 2013/2014 school year compared to the country's average of 82.4%. The relative share of dropouts from primary and secondary education (2.16% in the 2012/2013 school year) is also lower than its national counterpart – 2.34%. Pupils' average grades have been lower than Bulgaria's average since 2009 concerning the state matriculation exams. Excluding the year 2012, the percentage of failures has also been higher than the average.

Pernik was one of the districts featuring the lowest share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education in 2013 – 16.9%. A low share of graduates is also observed in Sofia District (14.4%) – the other district bordering the capital. The European Polytechnical University, opened in 2010, has gradually increased the number of its students but still remains one of the smallest universities in Bulgaria.

Healthcare

The overall level of healthcare remains unsatisfactory in the district of Pernik. The number of beds at multi-profile hospitals for active medical treatment is limited. 2.3 beds per thousand people are available at multi-profile hospitals for active medical treatment in comparison to the country's average of 4.6. There is a shortage of cardiologists in Pernik District. The doctors specialised in this field were two in 2013 meaning that 64,700 people have been treated by one doctor compared to Bulgaria's average of 5,900 people per doctor. This observation was confirmed by the fact that from June 2013 to May 2014, 40.1% of treated people, living in the district, have had to travel out of it to get the services they had needed, the country's average has been 35.4%.

Simultaneously, the local population's access to general practitioners and to specialists in Internal Medicine is good. The most favourable ratio of 4,300 local people to one specialist compared to the national average of 5,800 people per specialist is observed here. Health insured persons were 87.5% of the district's entire population in 2013 in comparison with the national average of 86.1%.

Environment

The assessment of the district's citizens of environmental quality has increased for a second successive year. It was 2.9/5.0 in May 2014 compared to 2.3/5.0 in 2012. Nevertheless, it remained the lowest in Bulgaria compared to the national average of 3.3/5.0 in 2014.

The concentration of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere is the sixth highest in the country following the ones in the districts of Kyustendil, Ruse, Sofia (capital), Stara Zagora and Varna. The terminated funding under the Environment Operational Programme could stop key projects that had been initiated such as the regional landfill site for household waste in Pernik Municipality.

The district features high rate of access of the population to public sewerage systems and waste water treatment plants by reason of its high degree of urbanisation. 79.1% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems in 2012, the country's average being 74.3%. About 74.1% of the population having access to public sewerage systems has been also connected to waste water treatment plants, the country's average being 56.1%.

Social environment

The local people's assessment of their overall satisfaction from life increased from 3.1/5.0 in 2013 to 3.3/5.0 in 2014, which is about the national average of 3.4/5.0. An improvement has also been noted in the assessment of the performance of individual institutions, although the overall confidence of citizens in some of them (such as the local administrations and the local bodies of the judicial system) has remained relatively low. Most of the indicators on social inclusion and living conditions in the district has demonstrated that the district has achieved levels about their national counterpart. The relative share of the population living below the district's poverty line dropped to 17.0% in 2011, being 19.0% in 2010.

There was no working cinema in 2013. The interest in local theatre stages has gradually subsided – 8,900 visits were registered in 2013 compared to 11,700 in 2011.

Key indicators for the district of Pernik

Indicators / year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5 316	5 633	6078	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	46.7	45.6	46.5	46.8	45.5
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	5.3	6.9	8	9.9	13
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	17.2	19	17	n.a.	n.a.
Age dependency ratio, 65+ to 15-64 (%)	32.3	32.8	33.8	34.6	35.5
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-8.8	-9.6	-11.3	-11.7	-11.1
Net migration rate (‰)	0.0	-1.9	-1.6	-1.7	-0.8
Relative share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	16.8	16.3	16.7	16.6	16.9
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams (%)	5.8	5.7	4.0	4.5	5.6
Average grade at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.3
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	48.7	41.7	52.0	48.90
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	22.5	15.4	35.0	42.3	48.4
Share of the population with access to public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	71.6	71.5	74.0	74.10	n.a.
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	90.4	88.6	88.8	88.3	87.5
Cases of hospitalization per 1,000 people	107.8	100.8	100.6	103.6	103.4
Average annual income per household member, BGN	4 119	4 194	4 473	5 021	5 764