

Pazardzhik District

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



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 com-

pared 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



Income and Living Conditions



Labor Market



Investment



Infrastructure



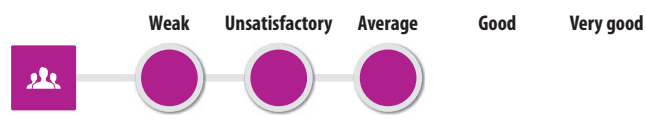
Taxes and Fees



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



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, Targovishte 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 WTPP (%)	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