

Razgrad

Population (2012)	122 886
Area (sq. km)	2 639,7
Number of settlements	119
Share of urban population (%)	47,3

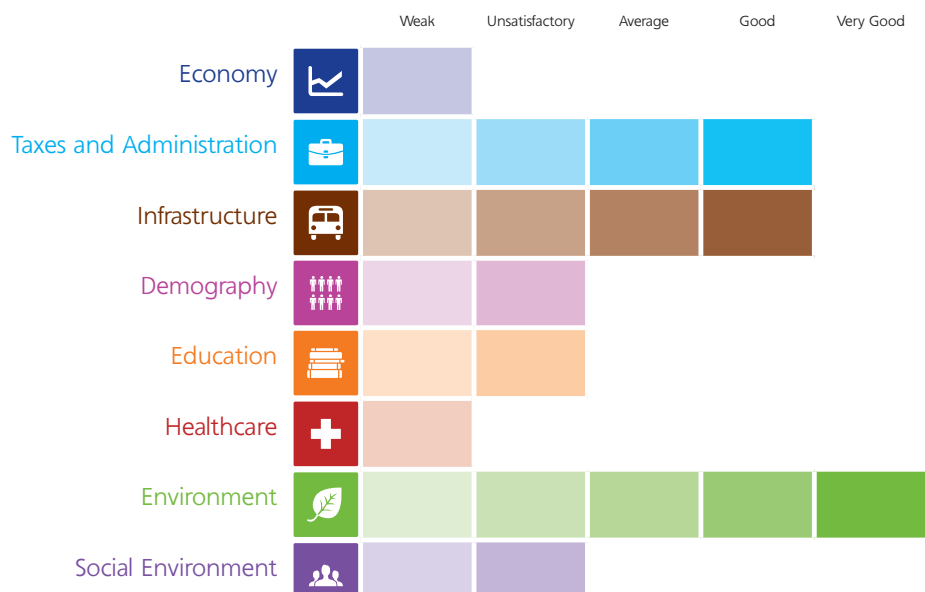


Overview

Razgrad District is near the bottom of the ranking on most of the indicators examined. Despite the presence of several well-functioning industrial enterprises, the district economy is weak and does not create enough jobs. Accordingly, household incomes are relatively low; the level of satisfaction with the standard of living has been declining. This explains the rapid depopulation of the district. Its population has decreased by a fifth over the last 12 years.

The public services provided have also kept Razgrad District from retaining its population. The district occupies the penultimate position in both education and healthcare. Local students received the lowest results from the state exams in Bulgarian language and literature in the country. In the health care system, there is a definite shortage of both general practitioners and specialised doctors, which forced many people to seek medical services outside the district.

The road infrastructure only started to improve in the past year with the rehabilitation and expansion of the road Ruse - Razgrad - Shumen - Varna. There is much to be desired in terms of environmental sustainability, and especially with regard to the extension of the sewerage network and treatment plants.



Economy

Razgrad District occupies the 18th position in economic development among the 28 districts of the country, as measured by GDP per capita. Compared to the crisis year of 2009, the economy of Razgrad has picked up and climbed seven positions, leaving behind the neighbouring districts of Shumen and Targovishte. The economic environment is characterised by relatively low economic activity. The number of non-financial companies per capita is only 65% of the national average. Investment activity is still low, although it grew rapidly in 2011 compared to 2010. However, there has been withdrawal of foreign investment over the same period.

The economic situation in the district predetermines the permanently high unemployment: persistently higher than 20% in the last three years. The employment rate of the population aged 15 and over was one of the lowest in the country (40.6%) for 2012 and explains the relatively low level of income in the district. The income per household member reached BGN 3,131 in 2012, or 72% of the national average.

The structure of the local economy is significantly different from that of the country as a whole, and is indicative of its overall underdeveloped state. The services sector creates only about half of the gross added value, while industry and agriculture share one fourth each. In the services sector, more than half of the enterprises work in the field of trade, repair and maintenance of motor vehicles. Highly developed are the pharmaceuticals industry, veterinary medicine, and the food industry. As a result of the development of football in the district, the construction industry also experienced some growth, but the effect of this is not permanent.

Local administration is doing relatively well with the absorption of funds under EU operational programmes. As of the end of 2012, the funds disbursed were BGN 244 per capita, which is a good result for the country.

Taxes and Administration

The business environment in Razgrad is relatively good. The rate of local taxes is about average for the country. Local authorities were rated relatively highly. The qualification of local administration officials, their responsiveness, and even the speed of work (which is a rarity in the country) won the approval of business representatives. The low perception of corruption in the district is also a definite plus.

Most companies in Razgrad District seem to have expectations for stabilization of the business environment, and even for some positive developments over the next 12 months. Nearly 25% of respondents expect to increase their revenues and investment activity, compared to 12% who expect a decrease.

Infrastructure

The district has a relatively well-developed infrastructure. The road network density is slightly above the national average; one-third of it is rated as being in good condition. Significant improvement of the road infrastructure is expected by the end of 2013 with the completion of the rehabilitation and extension of the Ruse - Razgrad - Shumen road, which will have three lanes.

The indicators on households' access to the Internet have rapidly improved; in just one year (2012) the district climbed to the second position in the country (from tenth position in 2011). The share of people aged 16 to 74 years who use the Internet has also increased.

Demographics

The population of Razgrad District has been decreasing at a rapid pace. The number of residents in the district has decreased by nearly 20% between 2001 and 2012. Razgrad is one of the most sparsely populated districts in the country with a very low proportion of urban population: only 47.3% compared to a 73% national average. The rate of natural increase is negative, with indicators close to the national average. A more serious problem is the net migration rate (number of people leaving the district against people moving into it), which has one of the worst readings in the country (-5.4‰ in 2012). The population of the district emigrates mainly abroad. Despite the deteriorating demographic situation in the district, the age dependency ratio of the population aged 65 years and older to the population under 14 years remains favourable. The district still has a higher score than the national average in terms of the ratio of people aged 65 and over to the working age population.

Education

The quality of education ranked the district of Razgrad 27th among the 28 districts. This is mainly due to the poor results from the state matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature. One in eight students failed the matriculation exam in 2012, and again in 2013. The district reported the lowest average results from matriculation exams in all six years since the exam was introduced. Although the district has the second highest rate of enrolment in grades 5th through 8th, a relatively good school network density and high number of teachers per 1,000 students, the results are still not good. Obviously the education system in the district is suffering from a lack of efficiency.

The number of population with higher education among people of working age in Razgrad District is extremely low: only one in seven has attained that education degree. By comparison, the average for the country is one in four people.

Healthcare

Razgrad District was ranked in the second lowest position according to the quality of healthcare services out of all 28 districts of the country. There is a noticeable shortage of both general practitioners and specialist doctors. One general practitioner is in charge of 2,000, at a national average of 1,500. One specialist in internal medicine serves over 6,800 people, compared to 5,300 for the country. There is one cardiologist to 20,500 of the population, which is three times the national average.

The hospital infrastructure is relatively well-developed, with 4.4 beds per 1,000 of the population, an indicator equal to the average for Bulgaria. The high infant mortality rate continues as a major problem: it is 13.1 per 1,000, the third highest after the districts of Sliven and Montana.

Nearly half of the local residents who used health care services in the last 12 months, sought medical care outside the district, a survey conducted by the Institute for Market Economics shows. Over 60% of respondents indicated that the main reason for this was the lack of specialists.

Environment

The quality of the environment in Razgrad District receives a very good rating. A major problem appears to be the lack of well-developed sewerage network. Only 42% of the population lives in settlements with public sewerage systems, which is the lowest share in the country. The situation with the share of sewerage systems connected to waste water treatment plants is more favourable. Razgrad District is ahead of the districts of Vidin, Silistra, and Yambol. The reason however is not so much in the presence of treatment facilities in Razgrad District but rather the lack of such facilities in the abovementioned districts. The condition of the environment in the district will be somewhat improved with the Razgrad water cycle project launched in 2013. The problem with the lack of sewerage networks in smaller settlements still remains.

Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere are significantly lower than the national average. Overall, the air quality is rather good, as seen also from local residents' assessment. They gave a rather positive rating to the condition of the environment. Greater levels of pollution are reported in the winter months due to the widespread use of solid fuel for domestic heating.

Social Environment

The general life satisfaction in Razgrad District is a little below the average for the country. The most serious problem for the district's residents is the low standard of living. Over half of the people surveyed are not satisfied with their financial situation. The relative share of the poor against the official poverty line in the district is quite high: 23%. One in five people in the district lives in a household with low work intensity. Nearly 46% of the population live in material deprivation.

The local administration's performance also adds to citizens' dissatisfaction. Half of the respondents assessed the performance of local administrations as poor or average. Disapproval of the way the judiciary operates is also prevailing. Over two thirds of respondents were not satisfied with the quality of the health care system in the district.

The local labour bureau also received unsatisfactory scores. There is serious criticism on the quality of infrastructure in the district. These conditions determine the relatively large proportion of people who would willingly move elsewhere if given the opportunity: almost 39% gave an affirmative answer.

Key indicators for the district of Razgrad

Indicators / year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5 443	4 960	5 549	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	40,6	39,7	36,8	40,8	40,6
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	14,9	18,1	22,6	20,3	21,4
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	17,3	19,8	22,8	n.a.	n.a.
Age dependency ratio, 65+ to 15-64 (%)	22,7	23,3	24,2	26,4	27,2
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-4,3	-4,4	-6,0	-6,4	-6,2
Net migration rate (‰)	-7,4	-8,7	-13,2	-7,9	-5,4
Relative share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	14,2	15,2	12,1	12,9	14,0
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams (%)	8,6	11,1	11,1	7,6	12,1
Average grade at state matriculation exams	4,1	4,0	3,9	4,1	3,8
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	34,9	34,6	32,0
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	11,6	24,7	27,9	42,2	58,1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	40,7	40,8	40,8	41,9	n.a.
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	85,1	92,3	87,6	91,1	90,0
Infant mortality rate (‰)	6,2	10,6	14,1	9,5	13,1
Number of registered crimes per 1,000 persons of the population	11,2	11,5	11,6	10,3	9,2