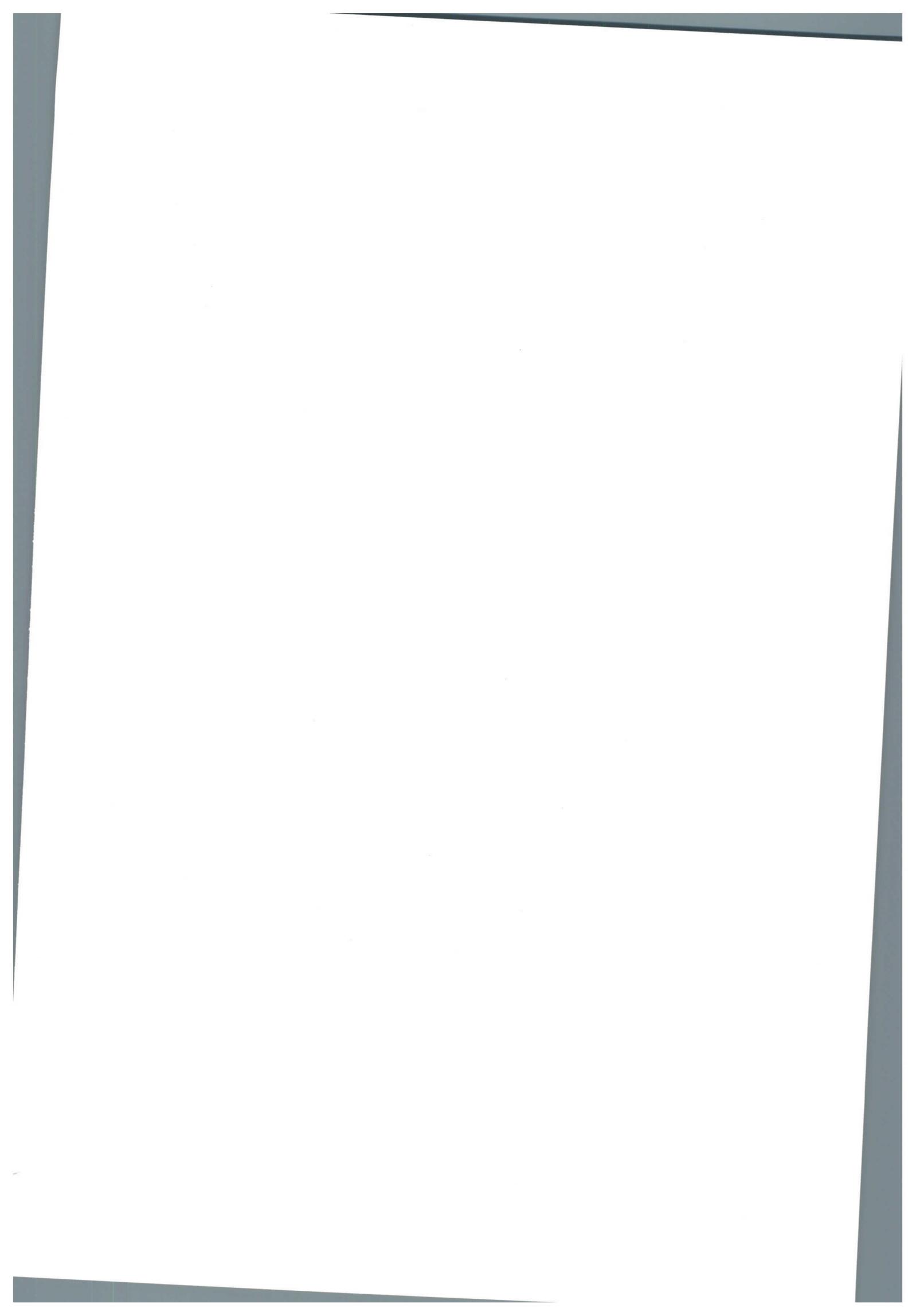
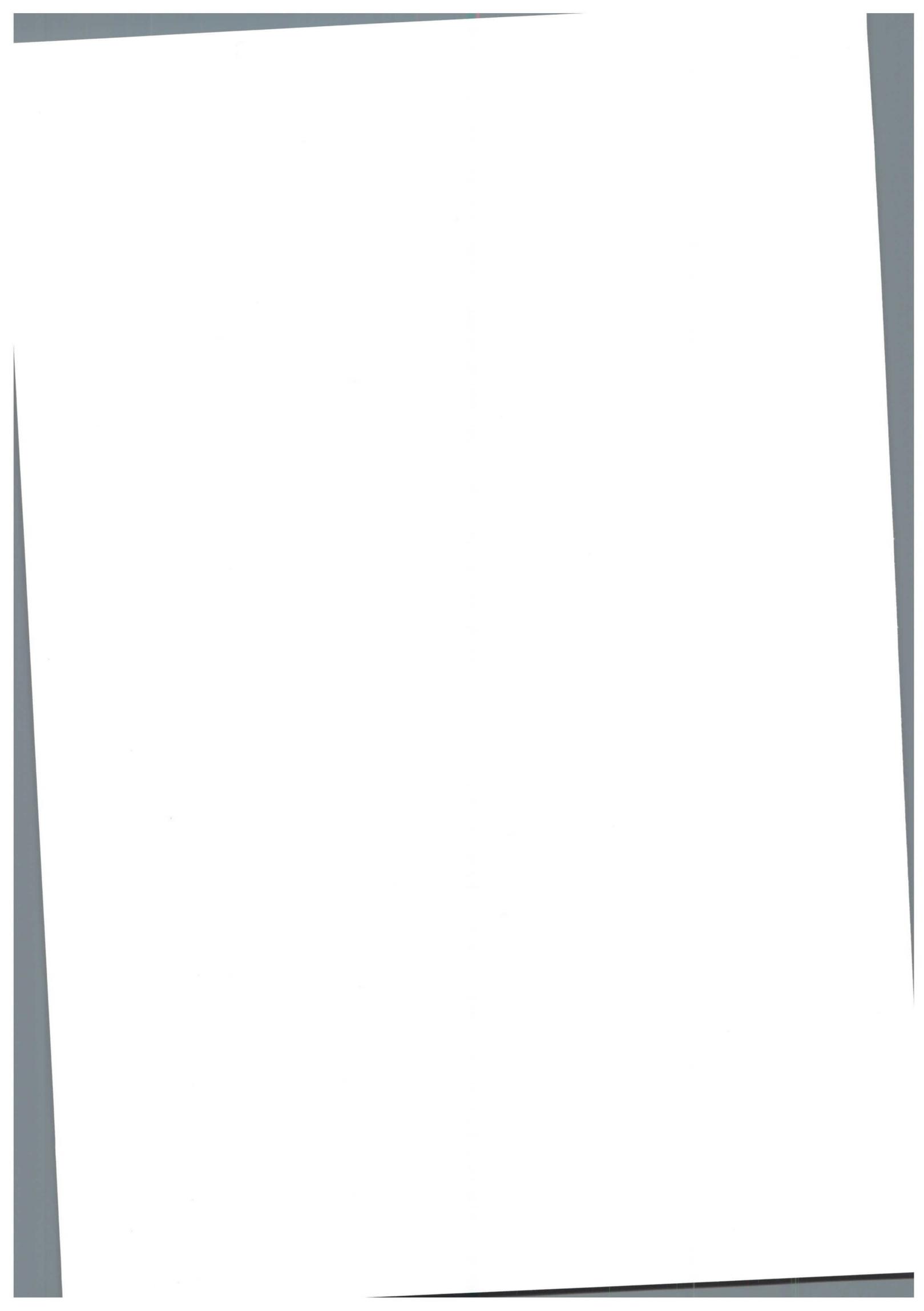


PORTRAIT OF THE REGIONS

VOLUME 10
BULGARIA







Errata

Page vii, Table of contents

Printed:

SOUTH-CENTRAL REGION	62
Kardzhali oblast	68
Pazardzhik oblast	70
Plovdiv oblast	72
Smolyan oblast	74
Stara Zagora oblast	76
Haskovo oblast	78

Should be:

SOUTH-CENTRAL REGION	62
Haskovo oblast	68
Kardzhali oblast	70
Pazardzhik oblast	72
Plovdiv oblast	74
Smolyan oblast	76
Stara Zagora oblast	78

PORTRAIT OF THE REGIONS

VOLUME 10
BULGARIA

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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet.
It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>).

Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

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Foreword

The extensive accession discussions already underway with the Phare countries of Central and Eastern Europe have stimulated demand for statistical data concerning them. As with the existing Member States, there is a recognition that regional as well as national differences are important. The "Portrait of the Regions" series is designed to provide in-depth regional studies to meet this need. After four volumes covering the fifteen countries that today constitute the European Union, the series was extended in 1997 to a fifth volume, which covered the regions of Hungary. The sixth volume was devoted to the Czech Republic and Poland and the seventh to the Slovak Republic.

While Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are grouped together in Volume 8, the ninth book in the series reviews the 12 regions of Slovenia. This tenth volume is similar in being devoted to a single country, Bulgaria, but there are significant differences. Here, coverage is at two levels, reflecting Bulgaria's adoption, early in 2000, of 6 level-2 statistical regions and 28 level-3 regions. As with the earlier publications, photographs, maps, graphs and statistical tables supplement detailed thematic texts on key aspects of the region. These include the strengths and weaknesses of each region, demographic and economic issues, employment and unemployment, natural resources, education and culture.

This issue of the "Portrait of the Regions" series is the first to be printed in the country concerned and is the result of very extensive co-operation between Eurostat and the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria. Project supervision was co-ordinated by CESD Communautaire and the preparation of texts and graphs was carried out by Eurogramme.

I would like to express my appreciation to all the individuals and organisations, particularly within the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, whose contribution to this valuable work enabled its publication.



Yves Franchet
Director-General of Eurostat

This volume was produced with the collaboration of the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria and was coordinated by CESD Communautaire. Preparation of texts, maps, graphs and photographs was entrusted to Eurogramme. Its publication was made possible by the financial support of the Phare programme. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the institutions of the European Communities.

eurogramme



CESD-Communautaire was in charge of the administrative, financial and contractual co-ordination of the project. CESD-Communautaire is specialised in the implementation of international programmes, establishing and promoting advanced statistical methodologies.

This project is financed by the European Union's Phare Programme, which provides grant finance to support its partner countries in central and eastern Europe to the stage where they are ready to assume the obligations of European Union membership.



Texts were drafted in cooperation between the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, Sofia University (Department of Geography) and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Institute of Geography) under the supervision of the Head of the Regional Statistics Department, S. Tsvetarsky, by:

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Edited by: G. Shopov

Contributors: Simona Klasinc, Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, Ljubljana

Structure of the publication

Each of the 6 major regions is presented in accordance with a uniform layout on six pages:

Page 1:

- overview (1)
- strengths and weaknesses of the region (2)

Page 2:

- strengths and weaknesses of the region (2)

Page 3:

- natural resources (3)
- population structure and trends (4)

Page 4:

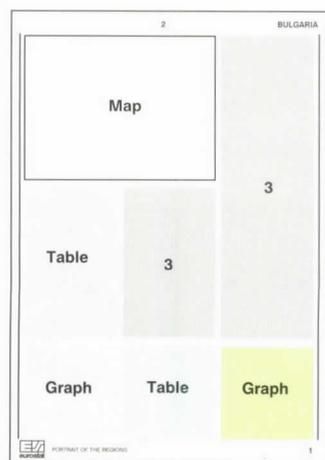
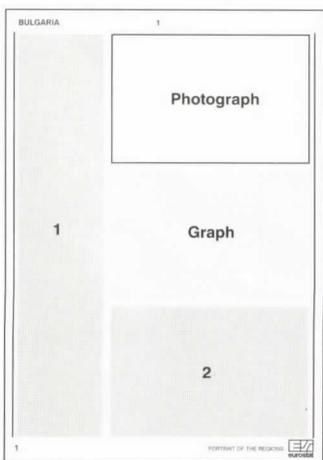
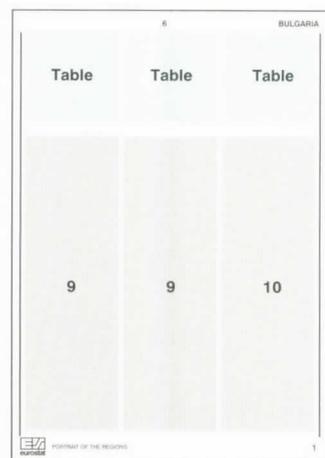
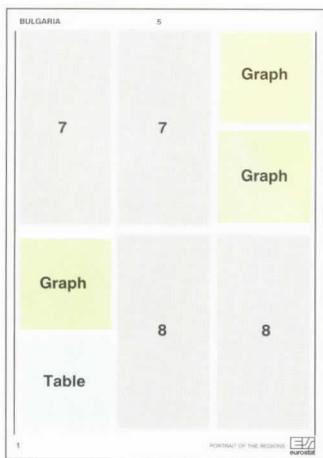
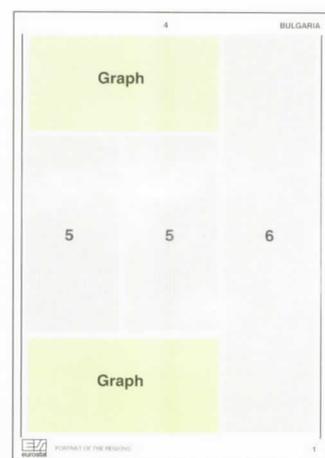
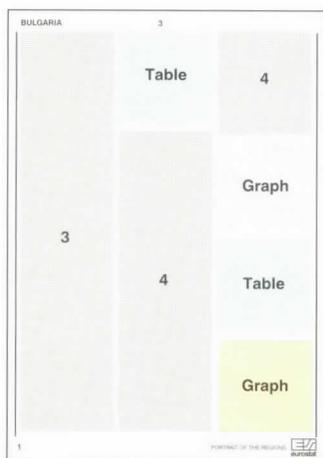
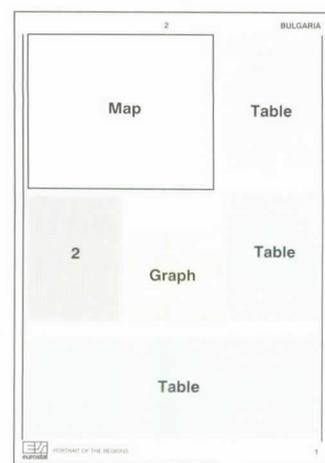
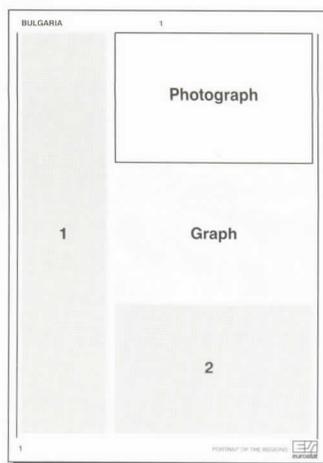
- economic structure (5)
- wages and incomes (6)

Page 5:

- employment and unemployment (7)
- transport and communications (8)

Page 6:

- environment (9)
- public utilities and services (10)



The smaller regions (oblasti) are presented in alphabetical order after the major regions to which they belong, each in accordance with a uniform layout on two pages:

Page 1:

- overview (1)
- strengths and weaknesses of the region (2)

Page 2:

- economic structure (3)

The PORTRAIT OF THE REGIONS consists of ten volumes:

Volume 1	Germany Benelux Denmark
Volume 2	France United Kingdom Ireland
Volume 3	Portugal Spain Italy Greece
Volume 4	Austria Finland Sweden Iceland Liechtenstein Norway Switzerland
Volume 5	Hungary
Volume 6	Czech Republic Poland
Volume 7	Slovakia
Volume 8	Estonia Latvia Lithuania
Volume 9	Slovenia
Volume 10	Bulgaria

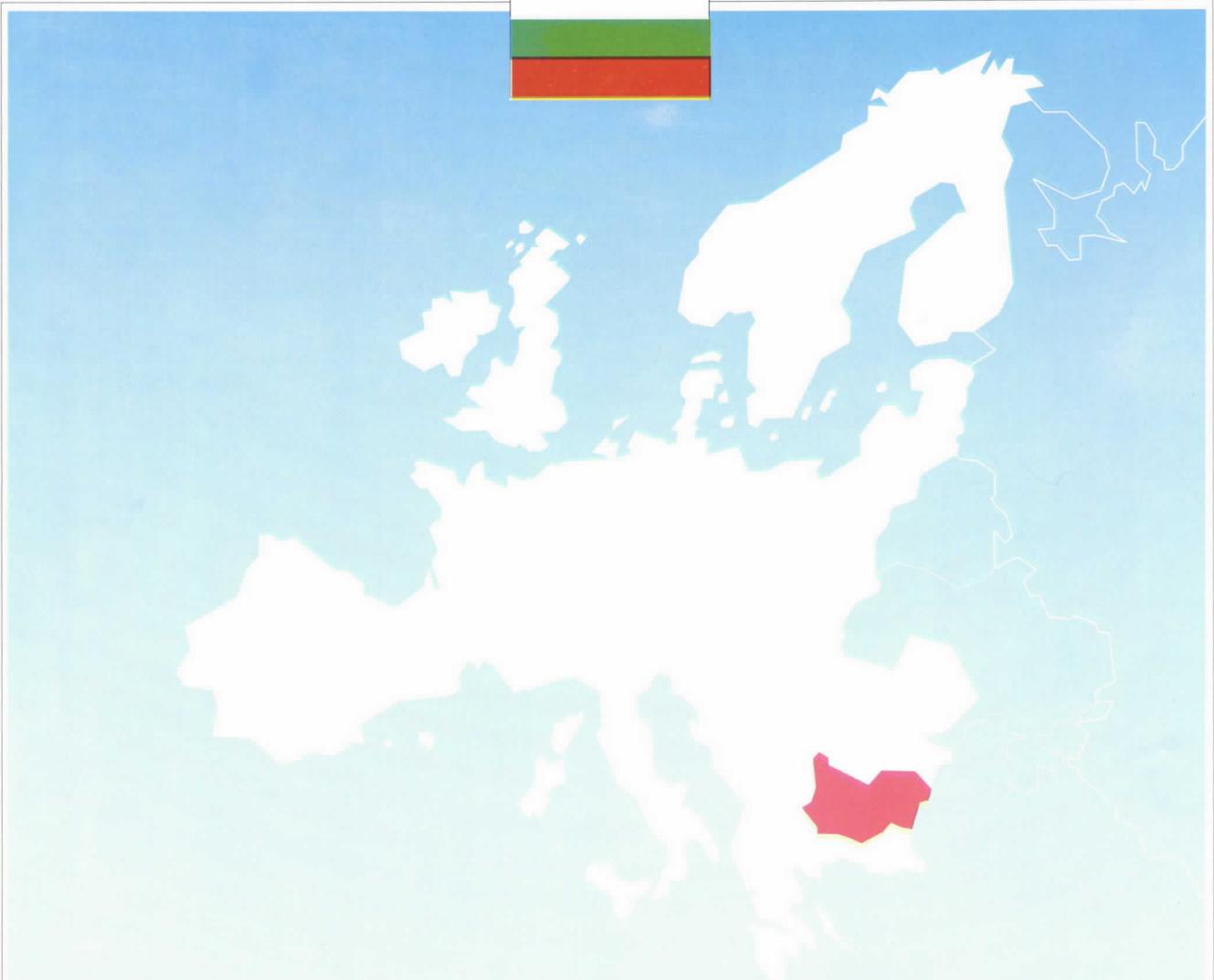
Table of contents

VOLUME 10

BULGARIA _____	1	
NORTH-WEST REGION _____	4	SOUTH-EAST REGION _____ 50
Vidin oblast _____	10	Burgas oblast _____ 56
Vratsa oblast _____	12	Sliven oblast _____ 58
Montana oblast _____	14	Yambol oblast _____ 60
NORTH-CENTRAL REGION _____	16	SOUTH-CENTRAL REGION _____ 62
Veliko Tarnovo oblast _____	22	Kardzhali oblast _____ 68
Gabrovo oblast _____	24	Pazardzhik oblast _____ 70
Lovech oblast _____	26	Plovdiv oblast _____ 72
Pleven oblast _____	28	Smolyan oblast _____ 74
Ruse oblast _____	30	Stara Zagora oblast _____ 76
		Haskovo oblast _____ 78
NORTH-EAST REGION _____	32	SOUTH-WEST REGION _____ 80
Varna oblast _____	38	Blagoevgrad oblast _____ 86
Dobrich oblast _____	40	Kyustendil oblast _____ 88
Razgrad oblast _____	42	Pernik oblast _____ 90
Silistra oblast _____	44	Sofia oblast _____ 92
Targovishte oblast _____	46	Sofia (capital) oblast _____ 94
Shumen oblast _____	48	
		<i>Explanatory notes</i> _____ 96
		<i>Bibliography</i> _____ 97
		<i>Legend to maps</i> _____ 98
		<i>Symbols and abbreviations</i> _____ 98



BULGARIA



With its area of 109 910 km² and population of slightly above 8 million, Bulgaria occupies the southeastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. To the north, the Danube forms much of its frontier with Romania, to the west it has a mountainous border with Yugoslavia and to the south its neighbours are Greece and Turkey. Eastwards, its golden beaches open on to the Black Sea. A small country with centuries-long history, Bulgaria stands at the crossroad of major routes from Europe to Asia. While undergoing substantial changes in its recent economic and social life, the country is firmly set on its way to a market economy and democracy.

The new administrative breakdown of the country is in essence designed to meet the EU requirements in the course of the accession process. Level 2 includes 6 planning regions,

which are not a part of the administrative structure, but are formed mainly for the purposes of economic planning. At level 3, the administrative breakdown comprises 28 oblasti. The next level includes 262 obshtini, which are the smallest administrative units with local self-government.

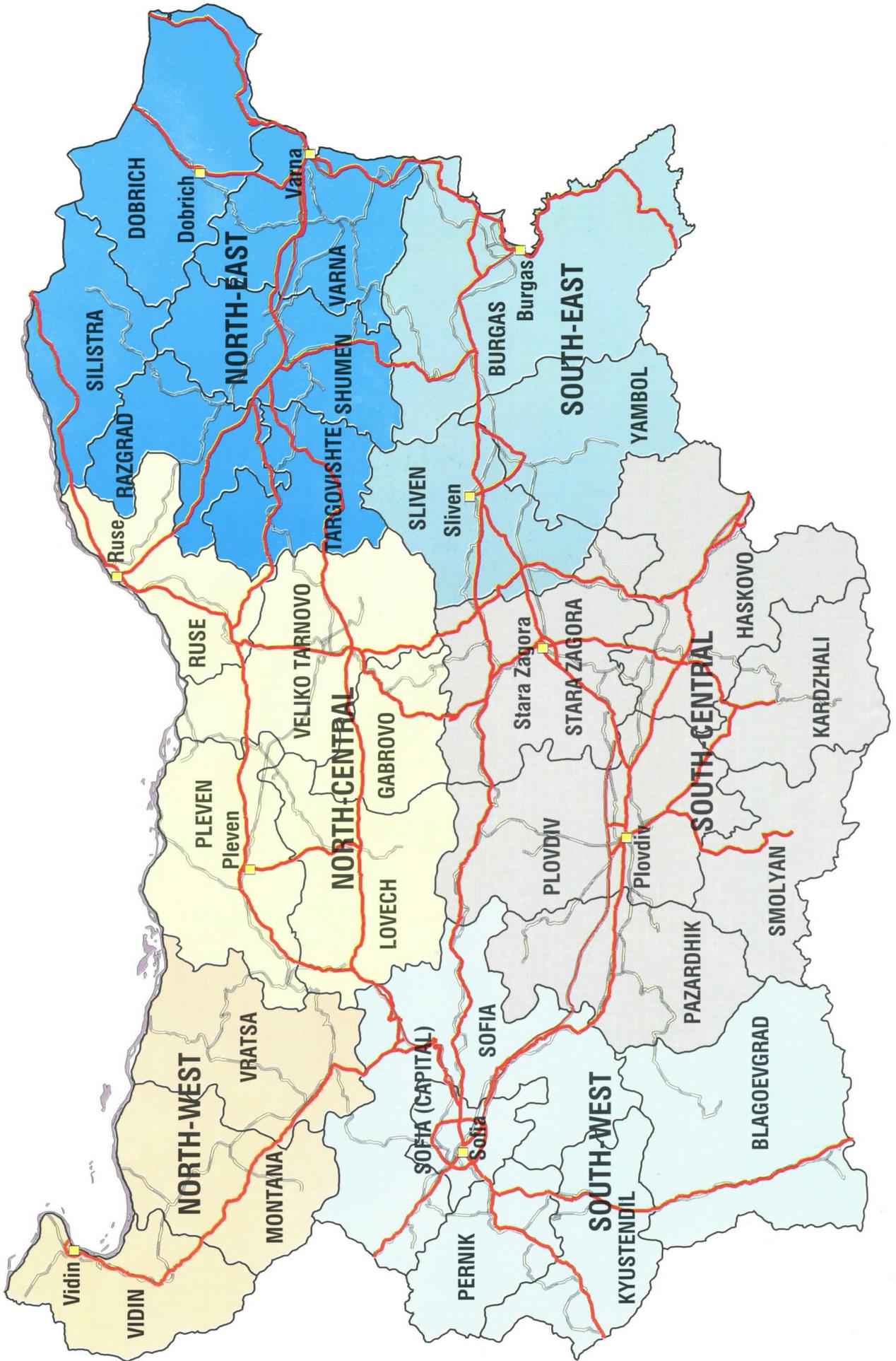
The economic and social analysis at all levels reveals sharp contrasts in regional development. The major disproportion is found in the South-West region, due to the presence of the capital Sofia within its boundaries. As a result, the region has the most favourable economic climate nationally coupled with an abundant and well-educated labour force. However, the concentration of the population in the capital has resulted in Bulgaria's highest population density and a correspondingly negative impact on overall living conditions.

In contrast, the economy of the North-West region is lagging far behind the national level, the region having the highest unemployment rate in the country. Furthermore, in this region and in the adjacent North-Central region resides the most aging population in Bulgaria.

While the rest of the regions occupy the middle ground, there are substantial disparities on an inter-regional level. Nevertheless, all the regions have substantially suffered in the process of transition to a market economy, the main problems being the slow privatisation process, particularly with regard to the returning of agricultural land, and the substantial cut in industrial production. The latter gave rise to a dramatic rise in unemployment which, although experiencing temporary improvements, remains a serious problem.



Rila Monastery is a symbol of Bulgaria's centuries-long cultural tradition.





North-West region

The centre of nuclear energy in Bulgaria

In ancient times, Thracian tribes inhabited this region. Following the Roman conquest, many important military and trade centres such as Bononia, Raciaria, Montanezium were established. After medieval Bulgaria was divided in 1375, this area was part of a separate autonomous Bulgarian state called Vidin kingdom, which lasted until 1396. Under Ottoman rule many important trade routes to Serbia and Austria crossed this territory both on the Danube River and by land.

The region is broken down into 3 sub-regions, which have a total of 33 municipalities and 398 settlements between them. The main centres are Vratsa, with a population of 74 000 people, followed by Vidin and Montana.

As its name implies, the region is situated in northwestern Bulgaria. The Iskar River bounds the region to the east, the Timok River to the west, the Danube to the north and the Balkan mountain range to the south. The northern border is a natural one, and coincides with the state frontier with Romania. The biggest Bulgarian ports are at Lom, Vidin, Kozloduy and Oryahovo. The trade routes to Central and Eastern Europe pass through Vidin and Oryahovo. The main border crossings are at Oryahovo (Romania) and Vrashka Chuka (Yugoslavia). Many settlements in the eastern part of the region are strongly influenced by the town of Pleven in neighbouring North-Central region.

Bulgaria's only nuclear power plant, "Kozloduy", is sited here, supplying some two fifths of the country's total electricity production. It has been the catalyst of development in a region, which is highly peripheral to the main centres of economic activity.



Bulgaria's links across the Danube to the heart of Europe will be enhanced by a new bridge at Vidin. Photo by Peter Dimov



Geographical position offers great potential

The region's geographical location is its strongest asset, since the 4th and 7th European traffic corridors cross its territory. An important prerequisite for future economic development is regional stability around the border areas at Vidin, Oryahovo and Vrashka Chuka. Military conflict in the region's northwestern neighbour, Yugoslavia, has had a negative impact on its development in recent years. It had a stagnating effect on the economy, increased the population decline, and was an impediment to the optimal use of the region's favourable geographical position.

A second important regional advantage lies in its fertile soils and good climate, which favour the development of eco-

logical agriculture, tourism and other economic activities. The region's specialisation in agricultural production confirms the existence of copious natural resources.

Furthermore, its high industrial capacity and skilled labour force are also among the region's positive aspects. The greatest potential is in the energy sector and in the chemical and food industry.

One of the major problems here is the large population decline, which is a result of a negative natural increment and migratory flows, due mainly to the economic hardship which people face. Any future improvement to the demographic situation is closely related to economic development, which in turn is



Which regions are similar to North-West region?

Area:

- 10 588 km²
- Ostergötlands län (S)
- Zamora (E)
- Budejovický (CZ)

Activity rate:

- 45,6 %
- Molise (I)
- Ipeiros (EL)
- Nyugat-Dunantul (HU)

Population:

- 603 000 inhabitants
- Essen, Kreisfreie Stadt (D)
- Puy-de-Dome (F)
- Mures (RO)

Agriculture - 1999

Number of private farms	165 077
Persons working in agriculture *	75 060
Total agricultural area (ha)	736 541
Total livestock	639 028
Sheep per 100 ha of total agricultural land	42,5
Pigs per 100 ha of total agricultural land	23,3
Cattle per 100 ha of total agricultural land	5,6
Main crops (1 000 tonnes)	
Wheat	326,2
Maize	179,9

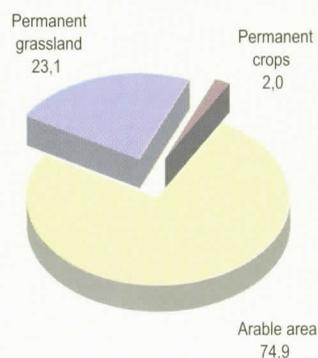
* see explanatory notes

dependent on improvements to the region's infrastructure.

Another regional drawback is the substantial drop in industrial and agricultural production. This is a result of the restructuring and the privatisation of the main industrial enterprises. The construction of a second bridge over the Danube River should boost economic activity here, and improve the attractiveness of the region for investment.

Last but not least is the problem of environmental pollution here. This is particularly serious in the cross-border and mountainous areas. A shortage of water and the lack of protection for forested area are also among the region's weaknesses.

Agricultural land use in 1999 (%)



	Area	Population			Activity	Unemployment	Employment		
	km ²	1000	Inhabitants /km ²	Change %	%	%	Agriculture %	Industry %	Services %
	1998	1998	1998	1995-1998	1998	1998	1998	1998	1998
North-West	10 601	594	56	-3,6	45,6	24	35	29	36
Vidin	3 034	141	47	-3,9	42,2	21	35	25	40
Vratsa	3 940	258	65	-2,8	48,5	23	33	33	34
Montana	3 628	194	54	-4,4	44,4	26	37	27	36



Natural variety

Covering 10 588 km² or 9.5% of the country's total area, the North-West region is the smallest of the six regions. The relief is varied. Running from north to south it comprises the following natural zones - the lowlands, the Danube plain, the Northern Balkans and the Balkan mountain range. The Danube plain encompasses the largest area, covering over 50% of the whole territory. The relief in the Northern Balkans is predominantly hilly and mountainous.

The climate is moderate, except in the region's southern parts which are mountainous. The average July temperature reaches 20°C and the average January temperature 0°C, the temperature declining from north to south. The average annual rainfall amounts to 600 mm. In the winter northeasterly winds prevail, which blow the snow cover off of the crops.

With only a limited amount of water available, the hydroelectric potential is estimated to be small relative to the share of the country's total, and is not used optimally. The only hydroelectric power plants "Petrohan" and "Gorni Lom" are situated in the Balkan Mountains. The Iskar, Archar, Lom and Danube rivers are used predominantly for irrigation and industrial purposes. The water supply to the population comes from the artificial lake "Ogosta", which has helped to solve the problem of the shortage of drinking water to a large extent. The thermal mineral springs at Varshets are also an important part of the region's water resources.

Soils are the black earth kind, covering 44% of the region's area, and predominantly situated in the Danube valley. The soil in the valleys and plains favours agricultural development, so that arable land accounts for 52% of the region's total area, a percentage that is higher than the national average of 38.6%.

The quality and quantity of ores and minerals in the region do not allow for the development of mining. Deposits of copper and lead ores have been extracted in the Chiprovtsi Mountain, but this activity has gradually declined. There are limited deposits of limestone and marl at Beli Izvor and Kunino and granite at Berkovitsa.

Main enterprises

Name	Activity
Ad Vidahim	Rubber tyres and tubes
Ad Himko	Fertilizers and nitrogen compounds
Ad Vida-Stil	Clothing manufacturer
Ad Vratitsa	Cotton weaving
Berg Montana Fitingi	Cast iron tubes
Ad Somat - Klion Vidin	Road haulage
Ad Beloizvorski Tsiment	Cement manufacturer
Ad Eliseyna	Copper production
Ad Saniteks	Cotton weaving
Ad Trimona	Footwear manufacturer

Considerable population decline

At the end of 1998, the region's population numbered 603 000 or 7.2% of the total population. The population density at 56 people per km² is lower than the national average of 74 people per km². The majority of the population live in the towns of Vidin, Vratsa, Lom and Montana, where the population density reaches as high as 100 people per km². The share of the urban population at 58.1% is lower than the national average of 68.0%.

Between 1992 and 1998 the region experienced the largest population decline of all the regions. One of the main reasons for this is the high death rate, which is far above the birth rate. Another major factor is the negative migration balance, which is mainly due to the poor transport and social infrastructure. For example, many schools were shut down in the region, which induced the population to leave the region. Poor economic conditions also contribute to the high intensity of the migration flows to the rest of the country and especially to the capital, Sofia.

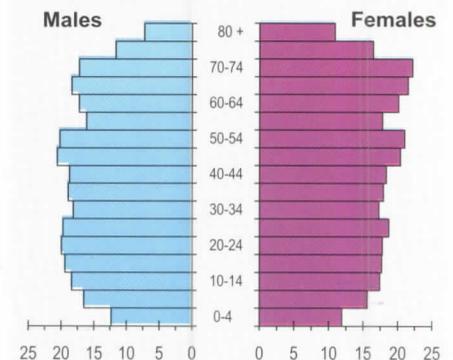
The intra-regional migratory flows are also strong as two-thirds of the people who migrated have moved to other parts of the region. The ageing of the population has resulted in an increase in migratory flows from the towns to the villages.

The age structure of the population is an unfavourable one. The population above 65 years has been steadily increasing and has reached 21% of the total population. This tendency will probably continue in the future. The population below 25 years is steadily decreasing. The ration of men to women is 49:51 in favour of women, which is close to the national average. The ageing of the population accounts

for the low birth rate and the high mortality rate. Children make up only 7% of the region's population, which demonstrates the exhausted demographic resources. Infant mortality at 19.6 per 1 000 live births is the highest among the six regions, while the national average is 14.4.

The population is homogeneous in terms of its ethnic and cultural structure, with Bulgarians numbering 93%. There are two ethnic minorities here, gypsies and a small number of "vlas", people of Romanian origin. The gypsy minority accounts for 6% of the total, according to the 1991 census.

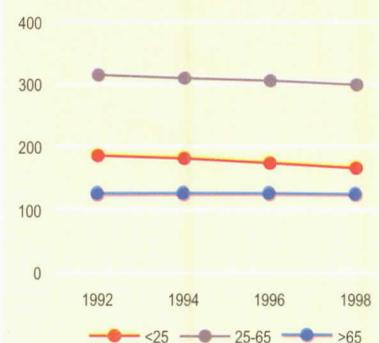
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



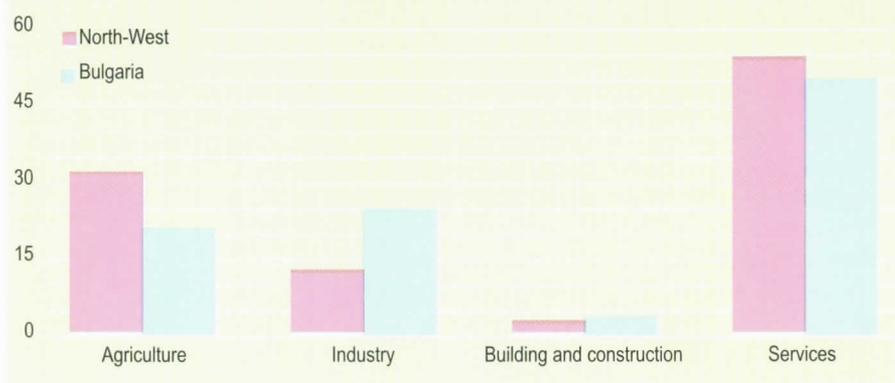
Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population 31.12.92	630,3
Births	36,7
Deaths	79,2
Migration	5,8
Population 31.12.98	593,5

Population by age-groups (1 000)



Gross value-added by sector - 1998 (%)



Economic development lags behind

This is the weakest region in terms of economic strength, contributing only 5.9% to the country's GDP. Per capita GDP is the lowest of all the regions. The energy sector is the biggest contributor to regional GDP, followed by the processing industry. Value added is highest from the non-market services sector, while the region has the highest value added from the agriculture sector of the six regions.

Agriculture contributes 10% to the total agricultural production in the country. Its development is favoured by the moderate climate and the fertile soil, along with the processing capacity and the market for its final production. The structure of agricultural land has changed considerably in the last ten years, the major share now being taken up by cornfields. The leading agricultural sector is crop production, with crop fields accounting for 53% of arable land, particularly in the area around Zlatiata. In addition to its specialisation in the production of wheat, maize, and sunflower, the region is also the main producer of melons and watermelons, outpaced only by the North-Central region.

The main industries are in the energy and chemical sector. The leader in the energy sector is the nuclear power plant "Kozloduy", generating 43% of the total electricity in the country. The share of the energy sector in the regional economy will most probably decline in the future, due to the forthcoming restructuring of the power plant. The major chemical enterprises are Himko, Kom and Vidahim. The food industry contributes 10% to total production in the country. The main products in this sector are tinned food and meat products in Montana and beer in Lom and Mezdra. The machine-building sector includes the production of electric cars in Lom, cast-iron molding in Vratsa and the manufacturing of metal ropes which is unique to Roman.

The retail network is not well developed, due to the small number of citizens. Only 7% of Bulgaria's shops are situated here and only 6% of the retail sales turnover in the country occurs here.

The natural and man-made features of the region are not used in an optimal way. The most attractive natural phenomena are the Belogradchik rocks

and the Ledenika and Magura caves. The mineral springs in the region should support the growth of the main tourist centre at Varshets. The various artificial lakes and the Danube River are also important for tourist development.

In general, the economic crisis in the country had a negative impact on the region's development. Several large enterprises were shut down in the period of transition to a market economy. Many others had to cut back production, because the market for it disappeared and also due to the slow privatisation process.

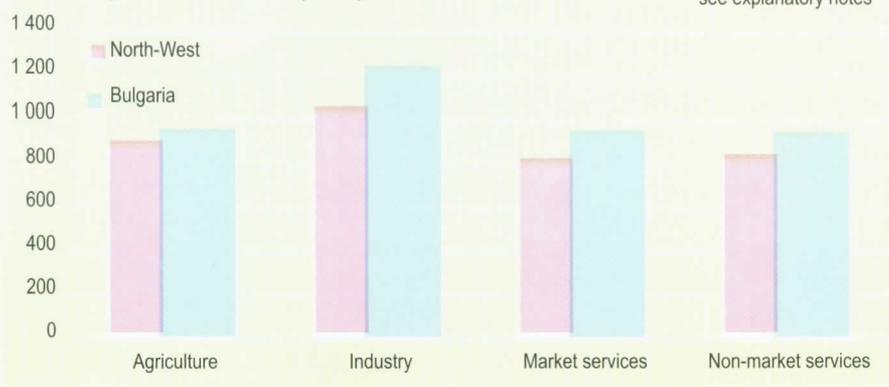
Low wage level balanced by high wages in the energy branch

The severe economic crisis in the beginning of 1997 had a negative impact on real wages in the North-West region.

The average annual wage at the end of 1998 was around 3.3% lower than the national average. However, the wages in most of the main sectors, such as agriculture, industry and market services, were the lowest nationwide, due to the region's poor overall economic development. The main source of economic activity, the energy branch, compensated to a large degree for the low average wage level in the other economic branches. The average wage at the power plant Kozloduy, around 20% higher than the national average for the energy branch, was the highest in Bulgaria and boosted average wages in the region to close to the national figure, despite the region's traditionally underdeveloped economy and low wages.

Almost half of the household income comes from wages and salaries, this percentage being the lowest nationwide. A note-worthy aspect of the income structure is the large share of social-security payments, due to the high percentage of the population over 65 and the high unemployment rate in the region. The poor regional economic development is also reflected in the lowest income from private business anywhere in Bulgaria. However, the agricultural specialisation here allows households to produce some of the food they consume and sell the surplus at the market, which explains the high share of additional income from agriculture.

Wages by sectors - 1998 (ECU) *





Low activity rate and high unemployment

The activity rate at 45.6% is lowest among the six regions, while the national average is 50.4%. The total number of people employed in all sectors is 6.4% of the total number employed in the country. The largest number are employed in agriculture, due to the specific demographic and natural conditions in the region. The decrease in industrial production has led to a decline in the employment level in this sector, while on the other hand the number employed in agriculture has increased. A slight increase in the overall employment rate has been observed in the region since 1999, a tendency which is most prominent in the regions of Vidin and Vratsa.

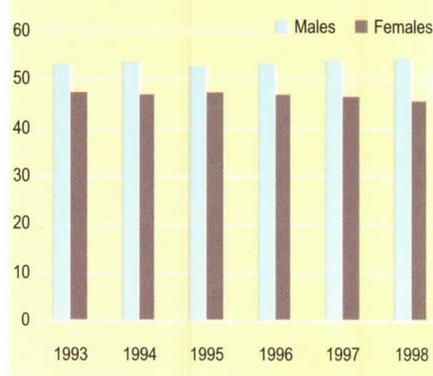
The unemployment level is above the national average, with the majority of the unemployed having been made redundant from the industrial sector. Throughout the period 1995-1998 the unemployment rate has rapidly increased. Several factors contribute to the sustained rise in the unemployment level. Firstly, many workers were laid off due to the rationalisation of industrial production processes. Secondly, the

labour force has a low education level, half of it having only primary or basic secondary education. Last but not least comes the lack of new job opportunities.

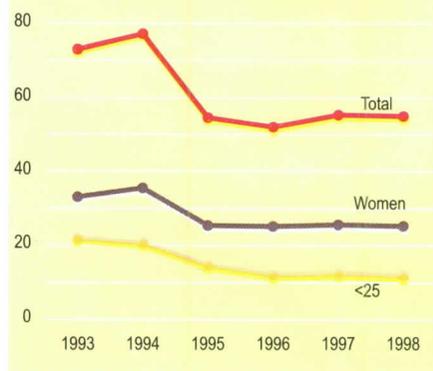
The creation of new jobs will encourage the gradual reversal of this trend. The completion of several national and regional investment programmes is also a stimulating factor in this process. Several special programmes designed to stimulate employment in the area of environmental protection have already started in the Montana region.

The number of unemployed men is higher than the number of unemployed women, which is an ongoing trend. The average length of time spent out of work is higher for women. A worrying trend is the increase in the number of unemployed aged 25 and under, which is mainly due to the shortage of jobs for newly graduated young women and men. The lowest number of job offers is in the region of Vidin, which places the whole region in the most unfavourable position as measured by this indicator. On average, the number of applicants for a vacant position in the region is twice the number of applicants nationwide.

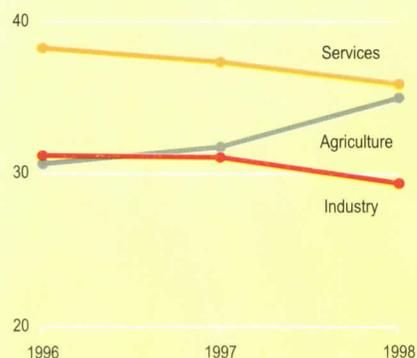
Resident employment by sex (%)



Unemployment (1 000)



Employment by sector (%)



Employment by age groups - 1998 (%)

	< 25 years	25-54 years	≥ 55 years
Men	7	82	11
Women	6	89	4
Total	7	85	8

Poor transport infrastructure

The development of the transport infrastructure is closely related to the region's border location. The project for the second bridge over the Danube River will compensate for its distant position from the main Bulgarian transport axes. However, various factors hinder the optimal use of the region's favourable location.

All types of transport are developed in the region, the main one being road transport. Total road length is 3 380 km and the road density is 319 km per 1 000 km². A major route is the Vidin-Montana-Vratsa-Sofia road, which forms part of the 4th European transport corridor. There are no highways in the region. The road connections with south Bulgaria and the capital Sofia are hampered by the relief, and are channelled mainly through the Petrohan pass and the Iskar gorge.

Rail transport has only a complementary function, the length of the railways

accounting for 9% of the country's total railway length.

While road density is close to the national average, within the region it is highest in Vidin. However, its structure is poor, since the majority of the roads are poorly surfaced. The total length of 1st class roads is only 5% of the national total.

Other than the Danube River, which serves all the region's main ports, there are no navigable waterways. The terminals at Vidin and Oryahovo connect Bulgaria to the rail and road network of Romania, and then to Central Europe, the Ukraine, Moldova and Russia. Goods reach Western Europe via the Danube River and the Rhine-Maine canal. The biggest port is situated in the town of Lom, its main activity being the supply of raw materials to the metallurgical enterprise "Kremikovtsi."

Although there is an airport in the region of Vidin, it is not used at present.

Communications - 1998

	North-West	Bulgaria
Length of road in km per km ²	0,29	0,31
Length of road in km per 1000 population	5,22	4,17
Telephone connections per 1000 population	345	387

Number of pupils - 1999

	Total
Pre-school	15 171
Primary	27 825
Lower secondary	25 190
Higher secondary (vocational/general)	21 151
Tertiary (higher education)	2 261
Total	91 598

Health care - 1998

	North-West	Bulgaria
Hospitals	19	276
Doctors per 10 000 population	27,2	25,3
Hospital beds per 10 000 population	76,3	70,7

Cross-border environmental problems

Due to the closure of some industries, environmental pollution has diminished in recent years but some parts of the region still suffer from severe environmental problems. This is the case with Vratsa, which is recognised as one of the most environmentally polluted zones. The Ogosta is the most polluted river in the region. Another grave problem relates to the Danube River, where the environmental conditions have worsened substantially due to local and cross-border sources of pollution.

Environmental conditions are under the supervision of experts from the three regional inspectorates for environmental and river protection in Vidin, Montana and Vratsa. Many volunteer organisations also contribute to the process of environmental protection.

With the exception of Vratsa, the population and the economy of the North-Western region do not suffer from a shortage of drinking water. The local authorities in Vratsa are currently cooperating with the responsible ministries in order to find a solution to this problem. The per capita consumption of drinking water is still below the national average. The treatment of different types of waste

is one of the severe problems that the region faces. Due to the lack of resources, waste management, regardless of any national programmes, is not yet at an acceptable level. Nevertheless, many municipalities have begun to take serious measures to resolve these difficulties.

All settlements in the region have electricity supplies, while some industrial enterprises are connected to the national gas pipeline. The village of Chiren has the largest natural gas storage facility in the country.

Almost all settlements in the region have access to the telephone network. The number of telephone lines per 1 000 persons is slightly lower than the national average.

Problems in the cultural sphere

Many cultural landmarks are preserved in the North-Western region, testifying to past cultural activity, and reflecting the influence of European culture. However, activity in recent years has substantially declined, due to the economic crisis in the country. The cultural institutions in the country cannot function properly due to a lack of financial resources.

The educational infrastructure consists of 316 institutions with 80 000 pupils. While there are no universities in the country, a faculty of the University for National and World Economics has been established in Vratsa. There are a total of 307 schools, the majority being secondary schools, with 10 being specialised schools. There are 12 pupils per teacher in the region, which is equal to the national average.

The health care sector consists of 20 health institutions and 6 500 hospital beds, concentrated in the towns of Vidin, Montana and Vratsa. The number of patients per doctor is lower than the national average, which holds true for the dental sector also. The number of hospital beds per 1 000 persons is above the national average.

There are 6 theatres, 18 museums and 678 libraries in the region. The majority of them are not actually operational, as a result of which overall attendance figures have substantially decreased. Among the outstanding cultural landmarks is the "Radetski ship" museum which is a part of the Kozlodui memorial, commemorating the great Bulgarian revolutionary, Hristo Botev. Traditional festivals are held in the "Baba Vida" fortress in Vidin.



Vidin

Northwestern Gate of Bulgaria

Vidin region is situated in the far north-western corner of Bulgaria, making it the closest part of Bulgarian territory to Central Europe. It borders the river Danube and Romania to the north, Yugoslavia to the south and west and Montana region to the east. It comprises 11 municipalities, within which there are 139 settlements, and 7 cities. With an area of 3 034 km², this represents 2.7% of the national territory. It has one of the smallest population sizes nationally - 141 000 inhabitants or 1.7% of the national total. At 48 inhabitants per km² the population density is below the national average (74 inhabitants per km²). The regional centre Vidin is the largest city in the region, and is home to 57.5% of the region's population.

This part of the country was inhabited in ancient times by Thracian tribes. In the 1st century it was conquered by the Romans, who built the Bononia Fortress at the site of the present-day city of Vidin. In the Middle Ages the Budin (Bdin) Fortress became the capital of the Bulgarian Vidin Principality which existed till the end of the 14th century. During the period of Ottoman rule, Vidin and its region served as an important military, commercial and manufacturing centre.

The diversity of its relief is due to the presence of parts of the Danube Plain, the lower Balkan and the Balkan mountain ranges, while its climate is moderately continental. The rivers flowing through the area (Archar, Topolovets) are small and of no economic significance.

The explored raw materials deposits are of predominantly sedimentary origin, the most important deposit being the gypsum field near the village of Koshava, not far from the city of Vidin. There is a rich variety of marble, clay and sands for building.



For centuries, the medieval fortress of Baba Vida commanded the right bank of the Danube.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Advantageous transport and geographic location

This far-western gate from Bulgaria to Europe features a number of advantages. Its transport infrastructure is well developed, with rail, road and water transport all utilised, making Vidin one of the most important transport centres in the country. There is also a civil airport in the town of Vidin.

Its geographic location, favourable climatic and soil conditions for agriculture, unique natural landmarks (such as the Belogradchik Rocks, and the Magura Cave), available skilled labour force, and its status as a Duty Free Zone are further advantages. A traditional trade fair of regional importance is held in Vidin every year.

However, the region is characterized by

a deteriorating demographic structure, and insufficient investment. What foreign investment has so far been attracted to the region is concentrated in the municipalities of Vidin and Belogradchik. One of the gravest social problems is the higher than average unemployment rate. Due to the economic hardship, the indicator for GDP per inhabitant is the lowest in Bulgaria. It is hoped that the construction of the new bridge on the river Danube near Vidin will enhance its attraction to investors.

Energy generation is restricted to 4 small hydroelectric plants, and the region relies mainly on the national electric power grid.



Which regions are similar to Vidin region?

Population density:
47 inhabitants per km²

- Orense (E)
- Allier (F)
- Šiauliai (Apskritis) (HU)

Population:

- 141 000 inhabitants
- Havelland (D)
- Tournai (B)
- Alpes-de-Haute-Provence (F)

Area:

- 3 034 km²
- Agrigento (I)
- Alava (E)
- Liberecky (CZ)

Diverse economy

While women account for 51% of the total number of inhabitants in the region, the birth rate reveals a marked diminishing trend. Due to its low birth rate and high death rate the natural population growth is negative. Infant mortality at 23.5 per 1 000 live births is the highest rate in Bulgaria. The region's population also contains a small group of people of Wallachian (Romanian) origin.

The region's economic base is quite diverse, with industry, agriculture and transport all playing their part. Machine tools engineering, electrotechnical products, the chemical industry, gypsum, wheat, wines and fruit for the domestic

market and for export are just some of its produce.

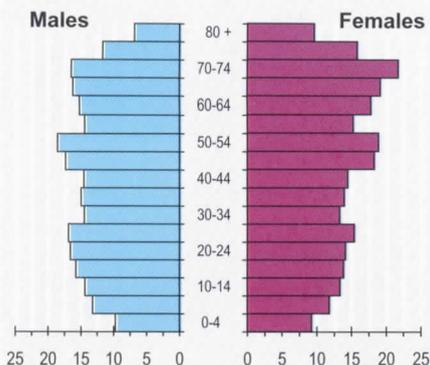
Only 1.45% of all employees in Bulgaria are resident here, and the employment rate (207 employed per 1 000 inhabitants) is currently below the national average (248.7 employed per 1 000 inhabitants). The unemployment level at 20.7% is above the national average (16%). The private sector provides employment to 26.5% of all employees compared to 31.9% nationally.

With 1 060 km of roads, density at 0.35 km per km² is slightly above the national average of 0.34 km per km². In recent years some improvement to the environment has been noted due to a reduction in harmful emissions and pollution.

All settlements are provided with water, and the demand for drinking water is fully met. There are several major mineral water springs in the city of Vidin and the village of Slanotrún.

In addition to the one regional hospital in Vidin, there are several district hospitals in (Belogradchik and Kula). That both doctors and dentists have fewer inhabitants to care for is an indication of the good access to these vital services. One medical doctor caters for 336 inhabitants as against a national average of 396 inhabitants.

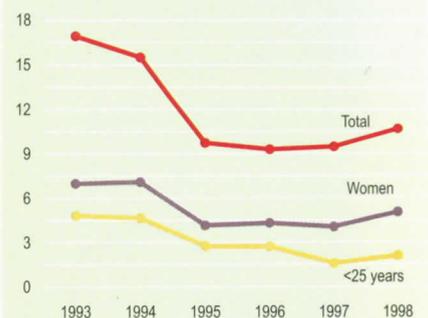
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	151,5
Births		8,0
Deaths		21,0
Migration		2,9
Population	31.12.98	141,4

Unemployment (1 000)





Vratsa

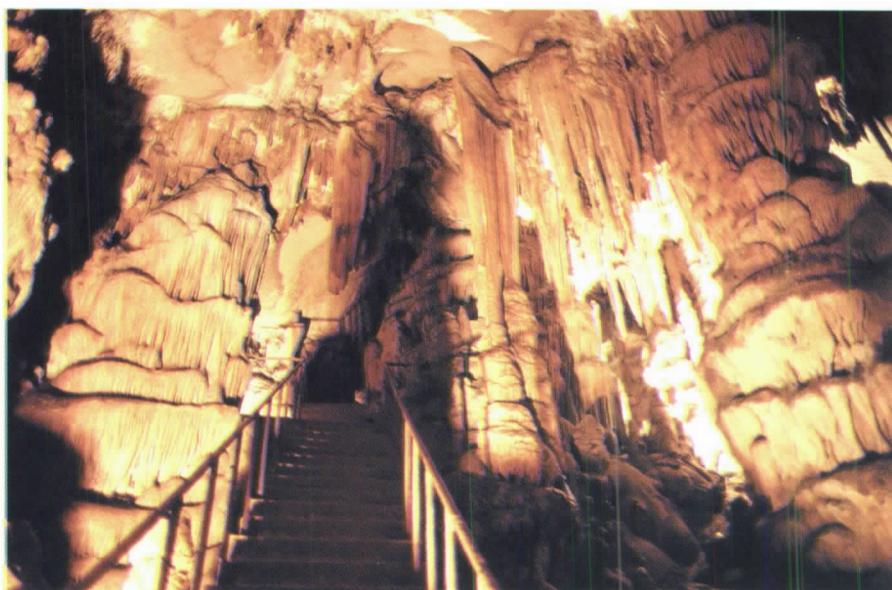
Mineral wealth

Vratsa region is situated in North-western Bulgaria between the river Danube and the Balkan mountain range. It has a broad outlet onto the river Danube to the north and internally is surrounded by the regions of Pleven, and Lovech to the east, Sofia region to the south and Montana region to the west.

The region, whose administrative centre is the city of Vratsa, extends over an area of 3 940 km² or 3.6% of the national territory and it is thus the largest region by both area and population size in the North-West region. It comprises 11 municipalities, within which there are 129 settlements and 9 cities.

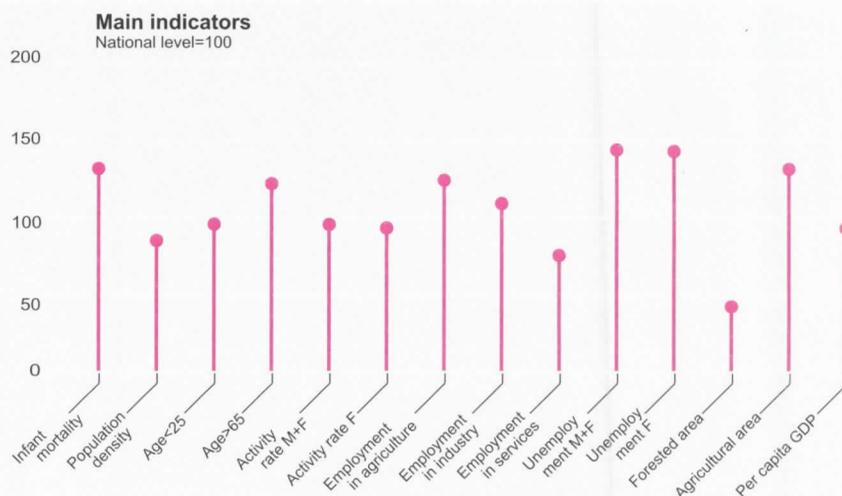
Thracian tribes (such as the Mizians) are the most ancient settlers of this area for whom historical evidence has been found. During the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages important roads ran in the direction of Vidin (Bononia, Bdin), Oryahovo and the river Danube. The city of Vratsa emerged in the first half of the 15th century as a fortified settlement. The relief of the area comprises both flat land (part of the Danube Plain) and semi-mountainous and mountainous areas. The climate is moderately continental. A part of the central course of the river Iskar - the longest river in Bulgaria - runs through the region. Another larger river flowing through the area is the river Ogosta. Fertile soils cover the flatland. This natural wealth is a good prerequisite for growing cereals, sunflower, sugar beat, grapes, and vegetables.

The explored ore deposits (and copper and mixed ores) serve as the basis for the development of non-ferrous metallurgy, particularly in Eliseyna. Natural gas, marble and building stones are of considerable importance for the local economy. There are rich deposits of limestone (in the village of Beli Iskar in the municipality of Vratsa), which are used for cement production.



Ledenika cave is the most famous of the many caves systems in the area.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Environmental and demographic problems

It has been noted that some environmental problems are caused from time to time by the CHIMCO Combined Chemical Works, which is situated in the city of Vratsa. Till now the Kozloduy nuclear power plant has not emitted any radioactive substances which might be dangerous for human health.

In addition to its good transport network, Vratsa region has favourable agro-climatic conditions, considerable production capacity for the chemical industry, machine tools engineering, metallurgy, and canning industry, as well as its own energy generation facilities (Kozloduy NPP). This is Bulgaria's only nuclear power plant, in operation since 1974. Located near the city of Kozloduy on the river Danube, it has 6 nuclear power units capable of generating 3 760 MW of

power and is therefore the largest national electricity producer. Well over half of the total revenue from gainful employment is generated by the industrial sector here.

The Oryahovo-Beket ferry is one of Bulgaria's gates to Central and Western Europe. This transport connection is of international significance for freight transport to and from Macedonia, Greece and other countries.

Economic development here would be much more successful if only some negative features could be overcome. These include a deteriorating demographic situation (declining population combined to low birth rate), a shortage of investment, relatively obsolete production facilities, and inadequate road maintenance.



national average (14.4). 2.9% of all Bulgaria's employees live in the region, which has a lower than average employment rate per 1 000 inhabitants and fewer than average employment in the private sector. An increase in the unemployment rate as a consequence of ongoing restructuring of the economy has been noted (22.9% compared to 16% national average). Agriculture plays an important role here with cereals, sunflower, vines, and sugar beet grown. Arable land accounts for 64% of the total area of the region. It is hoped that foreign investment, presently concentrated in the regional centre, will increase after the construction of a bridge over the river Danube at Vidin, although Vratsa is already an important transport centre with a well-developed railway and road network. There are 1 277 km of roads here, giving a density of 0.32 km per km². All settlements in the region have a water supply, however not all of them are connected to a sewerage network. Medical services are provided by 5 hospitals and more than 100 clinics and health centres. The provision of hospital beds per 1 000 inhabitants is 9.8 or above the national average of 7.1 beds. As well as numerous primary and secondary schools, there is a division of the Sofia University for National and World Economics in Vratsa. Scientific research is carried out at the Maize Research Institute at Knezha and the Experimental Station in Vratsa.

Which regions are similar to Vratsa region?

Land use:

- 64 % arable land
- Limburg (B)
- Midi-Pyrenees (F)
- Wien (A)

Population density:

- 66 inhabitants per km²
- Siena (I)
- Steyr-Kirchdorf (A)
- Mehedinti (RO)

Area:

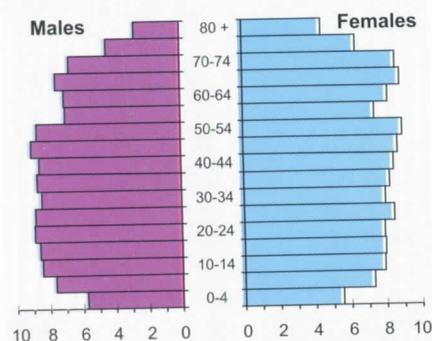
- 3 940 km²
- Sonderjyllands amt(DK)
- Serres (EL)
- Zlinsky (CZ)

Nuclear power and chemical industry

258 000 people or 3.1% of the total population of Bulgaria live here, and its population density at 66 inhabitants per km² is below average, as is the size of its urban population. The regional centre Vratsa is the largest of the region's 9 cities (Vratsa, Mezdra, Kozloduy, Roman, Oryahovo, Mizia, Byala Slatina, Knezha and Krivodol).

A large share of the population here are above active age, and women slightly outnumber men (51:49). Some people of Wallachian (Romanian) origin live alongside the river Danube. Natural population growth is negative due to the low birth and high death rate. Infant mortality at 18.6 per 1 000 live births is above the

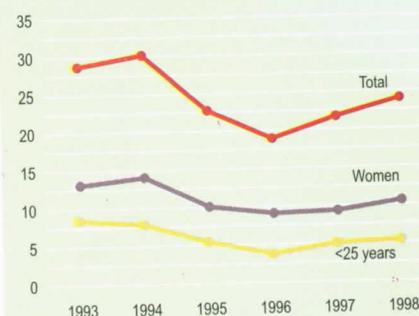
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	270,7
31.12.92	
Births	16,9
Deaths	31,9
Migration	2,3
Population	258,0
31.12.98	

Unemployment (1 000)





Montana

The heart of the North-West

The region is situated in North-West Bulgaria, bordering internally the regions of Vidin, Vratsa and Sofia. To the north it borders Romania (across the river Danube), and to the south Yugoslavia. Its area is 3 628 km² (3.3% of the total area of Bulgaria) and it comprises 14 municipalities. There are 130 settlements in the region, the largest of these being the regional centre Montana, followed by Lom, Berkovitsa, Valchedrum, Varshets, Chiprovtsi and Boychinovtsi.

The first historically proven inhabitants of this area were the Thracians. During Roman times a number of settlements were founded, some of which are still present today such as the regional centre of Montana and the town of Lom (Almus).

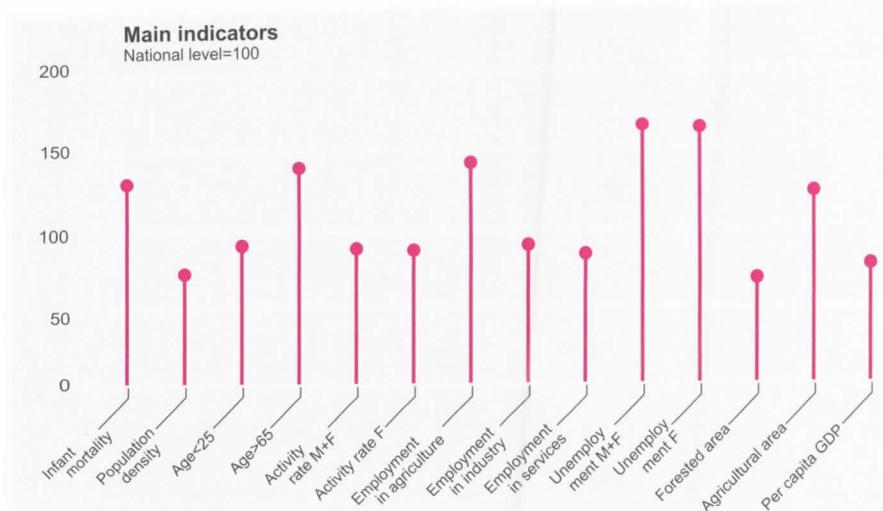
The region's relief is quite varied, from north to south consisting of parts of the Danube Plain, the lower Balkans and the Balkan mountain range. Its natural resources are low-calorific lignite coal of no economic value at Lom, iron ore around the municipality of Chiprovtsi (in the Balkan mountain range), marble, clay and marl. The climate is moderately continental with cold winters and hot summers. Precipitation is insufficient, particularly in the developed agricultural area in the plains. The major rivers - Ogosta, Tsibritsa and Lom - do not have high water levels and are practically of no importance for irrigation.

With a population of 194 000 inhabitants at the end of 1998, or 2.4% of the total population of the country, the region is among Bulgaria's smallest regions. Its density, at 55 inhabitants per km², is below the national average of 75 inhabitants per km². With 58.9% of the population living in towns, this is below the national average of 68.0%.



Since the 18th century, the motifs of Chiprovtsi carpets have symbolized the Bulgarian Revival.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Deteriorating demographic structure

The large share of the population aged 65 and above (at 22% the second highest figure in Bulgaria) causes considerable development problems. In addition, the number of people below 25 is below average, resulting in a marked deterioration in the age structure and a decrease in the size of the population. Natural growth is negative because of the low birth rate and high death rate. Infant mortality is also above the national average.

A high unemployment rate and a lack of investment exacerbate the region's

weak position. Furthermore, parts of the region's infrastructure are quite poor, with some roads in need of urgent repair-work.

Major development potentials may be found in the favourable agro-environmental conditions, the available labour force and the transport infrastructure (road and rail). A section of European Transport Corridor No. 4 should traverse this part of Bulgaria.

While road and waterway transport is well developed in the region, the road density at 0.29 km per km² is still below



Which regions are similar to Montana region?

Area:

3 628 km²
Lakonia (EL)
Viterbo (I)
Heves (HU)

Unemployment:

20,5 %
Lappi (FIN)
Mons (B)
Valladolid (E)

Population :

194 000 inhabitants
Schwalm-Eder-Kreis (D)
Zuidoost-Friesland (NL)
Gorenjska (SI)

the national average of 0.34 km per km². The section of the Sofia - Vratsa - Vidin railway, which crosses the region, is gaining in importance. Lom is one of the most important Bulgarian ports on the river Danube and is of considerable international importance as well.

Developed cereal crops production

More than two thirds of the region's area is covered by high quality agricultural land, where cereals, vines, sunflower, sugar beat, and other crops are also grown. Cattle, sheep and pig breeding are now all entirely in the hands of the private sector.

Industry accounts for 53% of the total

revenue from gainful employment, compared to 41.6% nationally. Production is considerable in the field of machine tool engineering (Montana, Lom, Belogradchik), and in the canning industry (Boychinovtsi, Lom, Berkovitsa).

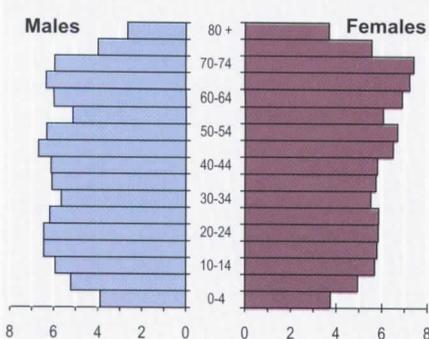
Foreign investment, both overall and per capita, in the region falls far below the national average. The construction of the second bridge across the river Danube at Vidin - Kalafat, which forms a section of the Trans-European Corridor No. 4, should help raise investors' interest in this part of the country and should enhance its economic development. The generated GDP per capita is below the national average.

The relatively high unemployment level (26%) is above the national average (16%) and represents one of the most acute social problems. The number of those employed per 1 000 inhabitants (211 people) is less the national average (248 people). The private sector is gradually employing ever more people and currently employs 36.9% of all those employed in the region, which is above the national average (31.9%).

While the population of the region is well provided with drinking water, not all villages in the region are connected to a sewerage network. Mineral springs are among the most precious natural resources here, the spa of Varshets in the Balkan mountains being of particular importance.

In addition to a regional hospital, there are district hospitals in the rest of the municipal centres. With one doctor attending to 402 people this is above the national average of 396 patients per doctor.

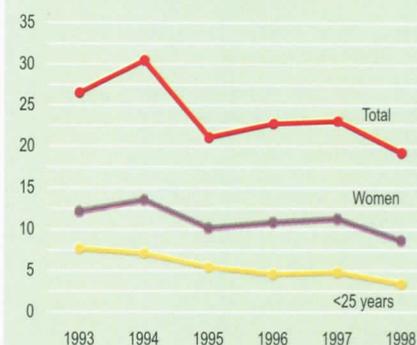
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	208,1
31.12.92	
Births	11,7
Deaths	26,4
Migration	0,6
Population	194,1
31.12.98	

Unemployment (1 000)





North-Central region

Centre of the Second Bulgarian State

Thracian tribes inhabited this area in former times. Remnants of Roman strongholds at Melta (Lovech) and Storgozia (Pleven), which were built after the Roman conquest of the Balkan Peninsula, have been preserved here. From 1185 till 1393, this territory was the centre of the Second Bulgarian State, which had its capital at Veliko Tarnovo. The fortifications on the Tsarevets hill, the remnants of the churches on the Trapezitsa hill and the numerous monasteries in the vicinity of Ivankovo (in the region of Ruse) date from that time. Under Ottoman rule, many trading and cultural centres were founded, such as Gabrovo, Elena, Tryavna and Svishtov. In 1834, after river transport along the Danube River began, the region developed into an important transport centre.

Administratively, the region comprises 5 sub-regions (Pleven, Gabrovo, Ruse, Lovech and Veliko Tarnovo), which have 40 municipalities and 1 044 settlements between them. The main regional centres are Ruse with 166 000 inhabitants, followed by Pleven and Gabrovo. Spanning the central part of North Bulgaria, the region borders all other regions in the country. The Danube River, here forming the state frontier with Rumania, demarcates the region to the north. The southern border runs along the Balkan mountain ridge, where the convenient Shipka and Hainboaz mountain passes are situated. In functional terms, the western and eastern ends of the region do not actually coincide with the administrative borders of the oblasti within it, due to the influence exerted over these zones by the main towns in the adjacent North-West and North-East planning regions.

Two of Bulgaria's main oil refineries are sited here, in the regions of Pleven and Ruse.



Numerous monasteries in the region kept alive Bulgarian identity during centuries of Ottoman rule. Photo by Peter Dimov



Worsening demographic balance

North-Central region benefits from a number of advantages. Agriculture is well developed, thanks to a favourable climate and good soils. As a result, the region leads in the production of vegetables and in vine growing. Another regional advantage is its favourable geographic location in relation to local transport axes and to international transport routes. The 7th and the 9th European traffic corridors cross its territory, the former following the right bank of the Danube River. Part of a major local route, the Hemus highway, runs through North-Central region. Industrial potential is focussed on the food and textile branches.

However, on the less positive side, the

demographic situation in the region is of particular concern, with the main problem being the declining population. This is due mainly to the aging of the population and considerable migratory flows to the rest of the country. As a result, the region has one of the highest death rates and lowest birth rates nationally. Another problem is the excessive concentration of the population in the major regional towns, which has a detrimental effect on overall living standards.

The region also suffers from environmental damage, particularly around Pleven and Zlatna Panega, where the major cement-producing enterprises are sited. The extraction of ore deposits also contributes to environmental pollution.



Which regions are similar to North-Central region?

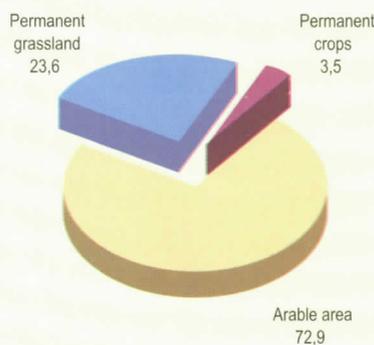
Population density:
69 inhabitants per km²
Franche-Comté (F)
North Eastern Scotland (UK)
Del-Dunantul (HU)

Age structure:
29 % under 25
Abruzzo (I)
Limburg (NL)
Obalno-kraska (SI)

Employment structure:
27% agriculture
Centro (P)
Sterea Ellada (EL)
Telsiai (LT)

Furthermore, economic development is hindered by the disappearance of some markets, while a lack of resources has led to considerable cutbacks in production and a corresponding drop in employment levels.

Agricultural land use in 1999 (%)



Agriculture - 1999

Number of private farms	361 659
Persons working in agriculture *	131 191
Total agricultural area (ha)	1 165 034
Total livestock	1 068 670
Sheep per 100 ha of total agricultural land	40,5
Pigs per 100 ha of total agricultural land	27,0
Cattle per 100 ha of total agricultural land	9,2
Main crops (1 000 tonnes)	
Wheat	608,0
Maize	310,8

* see explanatory notes

	Area	Population			Activity	Unemployment	Employment		
	km ²	1000	Inhabitants /km ²	Change %	%	%	Agriculture %	Industry %	Services %
	1998	1998	1998	1995-1998	1998	1998	1998	1998	1998
North-Central	17 921	1 237	69	-2,8	48,8	19	27	35	38
Veliko Tarnovo	4 663	305	65	-3,4	50,2	22	26	34	40
Gabrovo	2 019	154	76	-2,4	52,8	14	21	46	33
Lovech	4 128	178	43	-3,1	44,8	19	30	36	34
Pleven	4 337	323	74	-3,0	47,9	17	31	30	38
Ruse	2 775	277	100	-2,0	48,7	19	27	32	40



Natural variety

With its territory of 17 921 km², North-Central region covers 16.2% of Bulgaria's total area. The largest share of it belongs to the region of Veliko Tarnovo and the smallest part is taken up by the region of Gabrovo.

Its relief is quite diverse, reflecting the steady increase in altitude as one moves south across the region from the plains and fertile lowlands that dominate the landscape in its most northern parts. In the lower Balkans, the relief is predominantly hilly whereas the core of the rugged Balkan mountain chain spreads through the southern parts. Due to its high altitudes, transport connections with South Bulgaria go through the Shipka and Vitinya passes.

The climate is moderately continental in the north and centre of the region but becomes a typically mountain climate further to the south. The Danube plain and the lower Balkans are wide open to the north and northeast, which accounts for the influx of cold air masses. The average annual temperatures are between 11.5°C and 12°C. The distribution of annual precipitation, which is between 500 mm in the Danube plain and 1 000 mm in the mountainous south, is extremely favourable for agricultural development.

Arable land accounts for 47.4% of the region's total area. The fertile alluvial soils in the Danube plain are useful for agriculture, particularly for growing vegetables and crops.

Limited water resources are provided by the Danube, Yantra and Rositsa Rivers. The water resources of the Al. Stamboliyski artificial lake on the Rositsa River, are used for irrigation and hydroelectric production. The mineral water pumped at Slivek (Lovech) and Shipkovo (Troyan) has spurred the growth of several health resorts and tourist centres.

There are limited deposits of ores and minerals. In addition to basalt and fire-resistant clay deposits, small amounts of natural gas are extracted at Lukovik and Dolin Dabnik. The region's limestone deposits have spurred the production of cement at Pleven and Zlatna Panega.

Main enterprises

Name	Activity
Ad Svilozha	Manufacture of man-made fibres
Ad Arkus	Manufacture of weapons and ammunition
Ad Plama	Manufacture of refined petroleum products
Ad Sparki-Eltos	Manufacture of welding and handtools
Ad Beta	Manufacture of lifting and handling equipment
Ad Vidima	Manufacture of taps and valves
Ad Zaharni Zavodi	Sugar manufacturer
Ad Elma	Manufacture of electric motors, generators and transformers

Declining population

At the end of 1998, the region's population numbered 1 237 000, or 15% of the country's total population. The average density at 69 people per km² is lower than the national average of 74 people per km². The maximum density is recorded in the regions of Ruse and Pleven, reaching as high as 100 people per km². The share of the urban population at 65.8% is slightly below the national average of 68.0%.

The region has experienced a substantial population decline over the past seven years. There are two main factors behind this. Firstly, the decrease in the overall size of the population is a result of the negative natural increment. The death rate at 16.7 per 1 000 inhabitants is the second highest after the North-West region, while the birth rate is the lowest in the country, being equal to the North-West region. Secondly, the region has one of the highest levels of migration nationwide. Economic problems have intensified the migratory flows, with most movement of the population going towards the region of Varna and to the country's capital, Sofia.

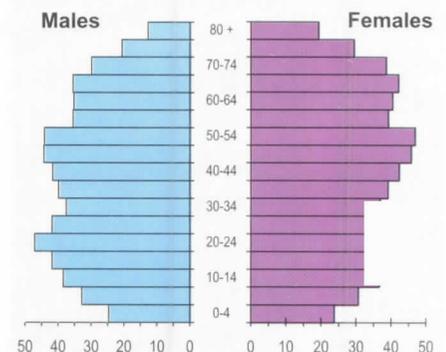
Furthermore, the age structure of the population is unfavourable, with 28.1% aged 25 or less, while the percentage of those aged 65 or above is 18.4%. The North-West region is the only one with a less favourable age profile and even that is only slightly worse. The situation is particularly acute in settlements in the Balkan mountains. Overall, the North Central and North-West regions have the oldest populations in Bulgaria.

This aging of the population has in turn a negative impact on fertility levels and results in the low birth rate noted above. The low number of marriages in the regions also contributes to this negative trend. Infant mortality, however, at 13.6 per 1 000 live births is lower than the

national average of 14.4, due to the well-developed health care infrastructure in the major regional towns.

In terms of its ethnic composition the region is relatively homogeneous. The two minority groups are Turks (6.8%), and gypsies (2.6%).

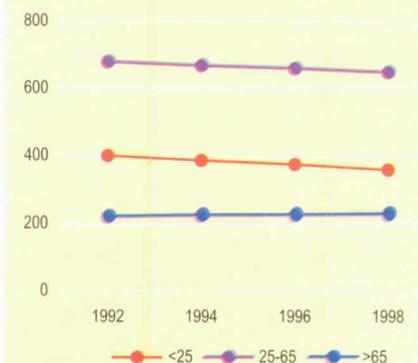
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



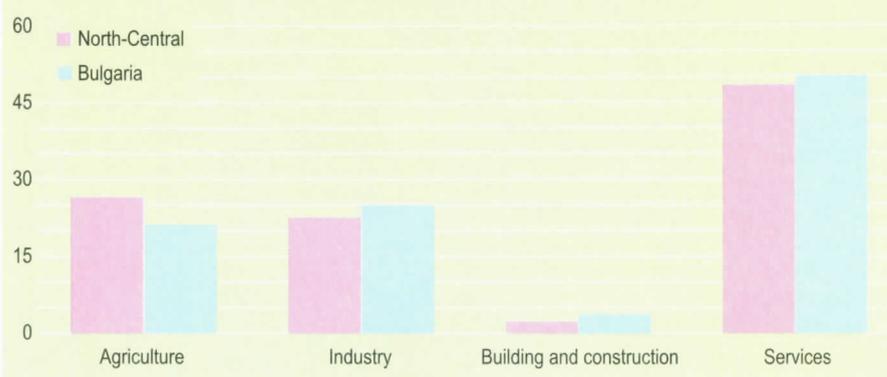
Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population 31.12.92	1305,1
Births	87,2
Deaths	142,4
Migration	-12,9
Population 31.12.98	1237,1

Population by age-groups (1 000)



Gross value-added by sector - 1998 (%)



Mixed economy

In terms of its economic contribution to the national economy (14.6%), the region occupies the middle ground, being neither the largest nor the smallest contributor. Similarly, per capita GDP is just below average. Agriculture contributes a higher share than industry to the region's value added, accounting for more than 26%. A negligible share comes from the building and construction branch, which is the second lowest figure nationally.

Around two-thirds of the total area is devoted to agricultural land, the national average being slightly more than half. The vast plains in the regions are easy to cultivate, which explains the specialisation in crop production by the agricultural sector. Just under two-thirds of all the arable land is given over to the growing of crops, such as wheat and maize. The region is the second biggest vegetable producer in the country, the main products being tomatoes, cucumbers and pepper. A considerable part of the population, living in the lower Balkans and close to the banks of the Danube River, is engaged

in vine growing.

This strong crop production ensures the fodder base for the cattle bred here, and the region has more cattle than any other region.

Industry is mainly based around food and textile manufacturing, but machines and chemical products are also produced. The food sector contributed around one-fifth of the total production in the country, its main products being milk, wine (Ruse), beer (Pleven) and canned produce. The chemical industry is also well-developed, producing goods which are not made in any other parts of the country, such as oil at Plama (Pleven) and Prista (Ruse). A noteworthy feature of the industrial structure is the absence of a leading major enterprise, as is found in the other regions. However, the strong textile and food industries are a prerequisite for a high level of activity in the private sector, especially in the market services branch. The region is one of the leading producers of building materials, the major products being cement at Pleven and Zlatna Panega. The

region is also one of the main suppliers of bricks, producing around 40% of Bulgaria's total brick production.

One of the major problems in the regional economy is the slow privatisation of industry and the cutting back of industrial production.

Lowest wages in Bulgaria

The average annual wage, at the end of 1998, was the lowest among the six regions, being around 8.5% lower than the national average. Wages in the industrial sector were the second lowest nationally, being lower only in the North-West region. The main factor contributing to this situation is the dominance of textile and food production in the regional economy, where the wages are traditionally low. Agriculture is the only branch in which wages are at a relatively higher level, being equal to the national average. While it was noted that people working in the market services branch had lower wages than in any other region, the chief reason behind this is that the citizens engaged in this sector serve predominantly the local population.

Around half of household income comes from wages and salaries. However, the low salaries in the textile and food industries make this share one of the lowest nationally, being lower only in the North-West region. The share of income from private business is the second highest among the regions, which can be attributed to the well developed food and textile industry, which has spurred the development of a private services sector.

Wages by sector - 1998 (ECU) *





High employment in industry

The activity rate at 48.8% is lower than the national average of 50.4%, and is the second lowest figure nationally. The employment rate is also below average. The region's employment structure has two distinguishing features. On the one hand, the industrial sector employs the greatest number of people, 35% here as against 31% nationally. The main factor behind this is the high employment level in the food and textile industries. On the other hand, persons employed in agriculture account for 27.5% of the regional total, which is only slightly above the national average of 26.1%. The share of the market and non-market service branches is close to, but still lower than, the national average. From 1996 to 1998, falling employment overall and in industry resulted in a marked increase in agriculture's share of employment, this share remaining relatively stable for the market services sector.

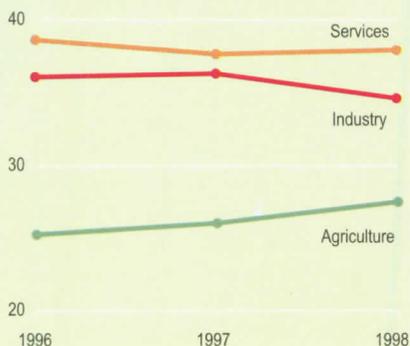
At 18.7%, the unemployment rate is higher than the national average of 16.0%, but is not one of the highest figures in the country, as the unemployment rate is higher both in the North-

West and South-East regions. Since 1996, the unemployment rate has been steadily increasing, the main reason for that being the overall crisis in the country. Although the number of workers laid off from industry and market services has increased, this again could be attributed to the nationwide tendency, rather than to any peculiarities of the region's development.

Several programs are running in this region, aimed at retraining the unemployed population and finding them a job. The main obstacles hindering the latter objective are the low education level of the unemployed and the lack of new job opportunities.

Female unemployment is higher than male unemployment, both being higher than the national average. The unemployment rate for the under 25s at 38.7% is higher than the national figure of 36.0%, but is still lower than half of the regions. While long-term unemployment at 54.2% is close to the national average of 53.3%, long-term unemployment is higher only in the adjacent North-West region.

Employment by sector (%)



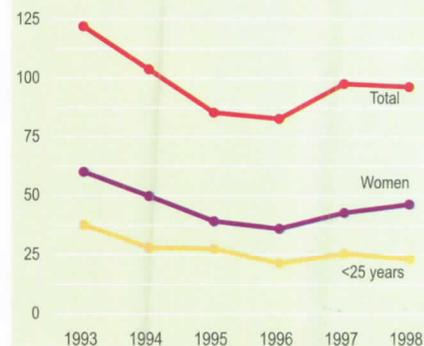
Employment by age groups - 1998 (%)

	< 25 years	25-54 years	≥ 55 years
Men	8	79	13
Women	10	86	4
Total	9	82	9

Resident employment by sex (%)



Unemployment (1 000)



Efficient transport infrastructure

Due to the region's favourable relief and geographic location, transport is the leading branch of the services sector. Nevertheless, there are still some gaps in the transport infrastructure and one of the major projects, aiming at improving the general transport conditions, is the TRASEKA project.

All types of transport are well developed, the main one being rail transport. The main rail routes are the Cherven bryag - Yasen - Plevan - Gorna Oryahovitsa - Levski - Pavlikeni railroad.

In terms of road transport there are 6 360 km of roads, or 17.1% of the total road length in the country. Road density is 355 km per 1 000 km², with the majority of roads being hard-surface ones. One of the country's main transport routes, the Hemus highway, crosses the region's territory.

The Danube River is the main navigable waterway in the region. The main ports

are situated at Ruse, Somovit and Svishtov.

Two airports are sited here, at Ruse and Gorna Oryahovitsa, neither of which is used on a regular basis.

Communications - 1998

	North-Central	Bulgaria
Length of road in km per km ²	0,34	0,31
Length of road in km per 1000 population	4,92	4,17
Telephone connections per 1000 population	416	387

Number of pupils - 1999

	Total
Pre-school	30 225
Primary	55 183
Lower secondary	52 376
Higher secondary (vocational/general)	49 998
Tertiary (higher education)	44 554
Total	232 336

Health care - 1998

	North-Central	Bulgaria
Hospitals	44	276
Doctors per 10 000 population	23,9	25,3
Hospital beds per 10 000 population	91,4	70,7

High level of industrial pollution

Environmental damage is one of the main regional problems. This situation has worsened particularly in the border areas, due to cross-border sources of pollution. The Danube River and the towns of Ruse, Nikopol and Svishtov suffer most from this problem. The cut backs in industrial productions in recent years have led to an improvement in the ecological state in the region's southern parts.

The region's own industrial sector also contributes to environmental pollution, the major polluters being the cement-producing plants at Zlatna Panega and Pleven. Enterprises engaged in textile and machine production create waste, which flows into the rivers and creates substantial damage to the ecological balance.

Due to its limited water resources, the region has had to build several artificial lakes, including the ones at Al. Stamboliysky and Yovkovtsi, which have helped to overcome the problem

of providing an adequate water supply for the population. Around 13.8% of the total population faces restrictions on its water use, but in the region of Lovech this share reaches as high as 60%. Per capita water consumption is slightly lower than the national average.

The national gas pipeline passes through the region, supplying gas to the region's main enterprises.

All settlements are connected to the electricity supply and have access to sewerage. The telecommunications network is also well developed here, and only the South-West region has a higher number of post offices and telephone lines.

Strong academic tradition

Many cultural landmarks are preserved in the North-Central region, dating from the period of the second Bulgarian state and the Enlightenment. Numerous monasteries are situated in the region, two particularly impressive ones being the Troyanski and Dryanovski monasteries. In Roman times, a major route

crossed the region's territory, connecting the southern with the northern parts of the country.

There are 8 theatres, 2 opera houses, 48 museums and around 1 600 libraries in the region. The major cultural centres are Ruse, Pleven, Veliko Tarnovo and Gabrovo. The first secondary school in the country was set up in the region of Gabrovo, dating back to the years before Ottoman rule.

The region's educational needs are served by 7 universities and more than 600 other educational institutions. The majority of the educational establishments are concentrated in the main regional academic centre of Veliko Tarnovo. The major academic institutions are the Medical academy in Pleven and the Economic Academy in Svishtov. 17% of all students in Bulgaria study here, which is the second highest figure in the country.

The health care sector includes 44 hospitals, maintaining around 19.5% of all hospital beds nationwide. 14% of the country's doctors work here, the number of patients per doctor being 418.



Veliko Tarnovo

Home to former capital of Bulgaria

Together with the regions of Pleven, Lovech, Ruse and Gabrovo, Veliko Tarnovo is situated in the North-Central region of Bulgaria. In addition to the above regions, it also borders on the regions of Targovishte, Sliven and Stara Zagora. Veliko Tarnovo is divided into 10 municipalities, which have in total 333 settlements. Of these, 171 are very small villages (below 50 inhabitants), which is characteristic for this part of the country, particularly for the southern mountainous sections. There are 14 towns in the region, the largest being the regional centre Veliko Tarnovo. Other towns of note include Gorna Oryahovitsa, Pavlikeni and the Danube port of Svishtov.

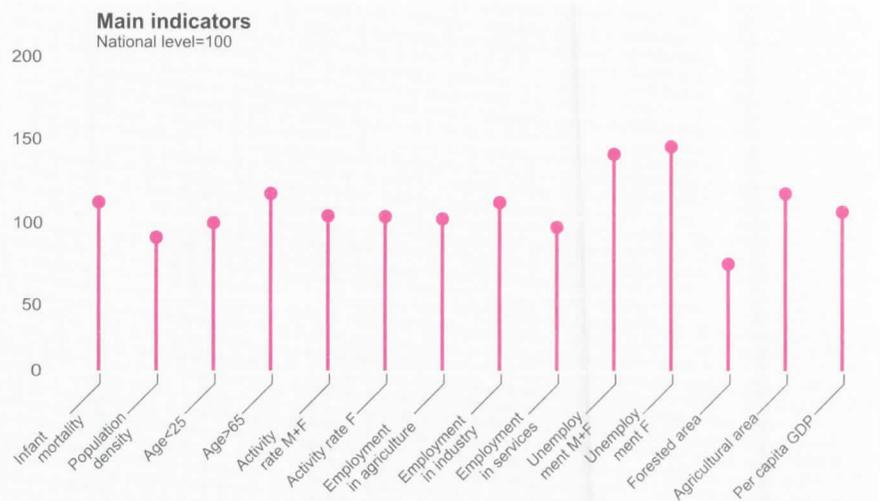
The area of the region is 4 663 km² (4.2% of the national total) and it comprises parts of the Danube Plain, the lower Balkans and the Balkan mountain range. The relief changes from a flat plain around the river Danube to semi-mountainous and mountainous in the southern end of the region.

This part of Bulgaria has a rich historical past. Remains of the Roman cities Nikopolis ad Istrum and Nove (present-day Svishtov) are situated in the region. Veliko Tarnovo entered Bulgarian history in 1185 after the uprising of the Assen and Petar boyars, when Bulgaria overthrew 150 years of Byzantine rule. As the capital of the Second Bulgarian State (1185-1391), the city underwent vigorous economic and cultural growth. A school for religious and literary studies was founded, which today would be known as a university. In 1393 Veliko Tarnovo was conquered by the Ottoman Turks and the city was destroyed. After the liberation of Bulgaria (1878), it was again for a short time the capital. In 1878, the first Bulgarian National Assembly (Parliament) was summoned there and approved the first Bulgarian constitution.



The remains of the fortress at Tsarevets recall the grandeur of the Second Bulgarian State.

Photo by Peter Dimov



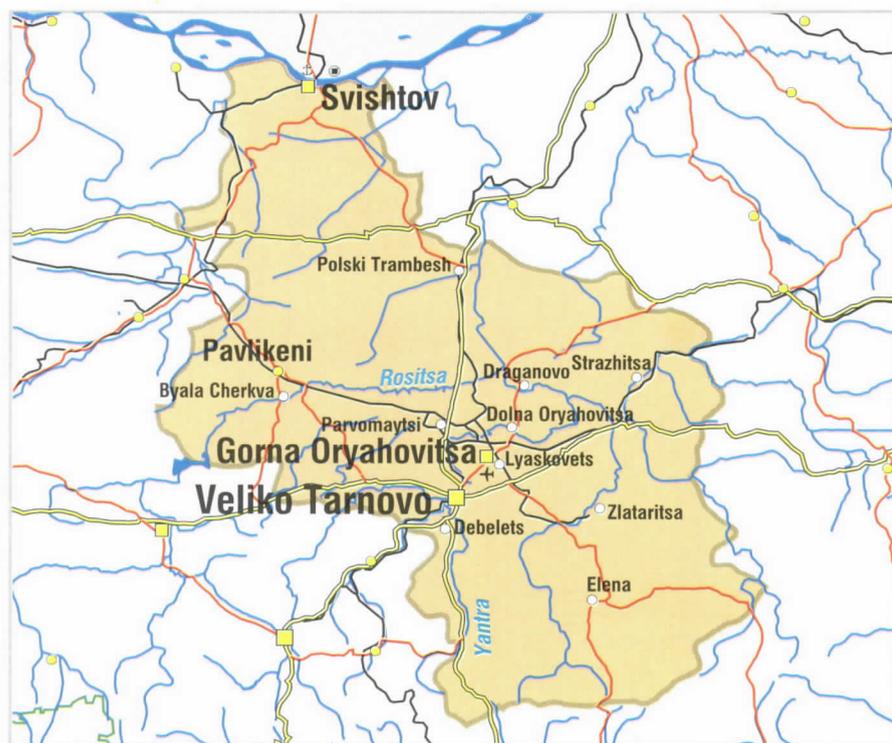
Rich past but acute shortage of investment

Veliko Tarnovo is a region with a well preserved environment, mineral springs, numerous archaeological and ethnic artefacts, which give it great scope for developing its tourist industry. Furthermore, its well-developed road network, manufacturing facilities for the chemical and radio-electronics industry, a considerable scientific potential and skilled labour force are other positive features of the region.

There are certain barriers, however, which hinder the full utilisation of the afore-mentioned advantages. Among these are the deteriorating demographic situation, the acute shortage of investment capital (the region is among the lowest nationally in terms of per capita foreign investment), and depopulation of

the mountainous regions.

In terms of natural resources, non-metallic deposits (clay, marl, limestone, quartz sand) are of economic importance. Limited deposits of black coal have been found in the Balkan mountain range. The climate is moderately continental. The Yantra River basin is linked to all other rivers in the region. The region's water resources are supplemented by numerous mineral springs (in the village of Voneshta Voda, the towns of Svishtov, Polski Trambesh). Fertile humus soils are found near the Danube, while alluvial soils, suitable for vegetable-growing, are spread along the river valleys. Forests occupy 21% of the area and add to the natural wealth of the region.



Which regions are similar to Veliko Tarnovo region?

Area:
4 663 km²
Haute-Corse (FR)
Veszprem (HU)
Waldviertel (A)

Population:
305 000 inhabitants
L'Aquila (I)
Ialomita (RO)
Soest (D)

Employment structure:
40 % services
Centro (P)
Dytiki Makedonia (EL)
Zemgale (LV)

Processing industries and intensive agriculture

The population of the region numbers 304 000 inhabitants (1998), equivalent to some 3.7% of the national total. Population density (65 inhabitants per km²) is below the national average. As elsewhere in the region, the birth rate is low and the death rate is high, resulting in a negative natural population growth. The age structure is relatively well balanced, the population under 25 years being a substantially higher percentage of the total compared to the population aged above 65 (30% and 18% respectively).

The employment rate is somewhat above average, while per capita GDP is equal to the national average. Food and

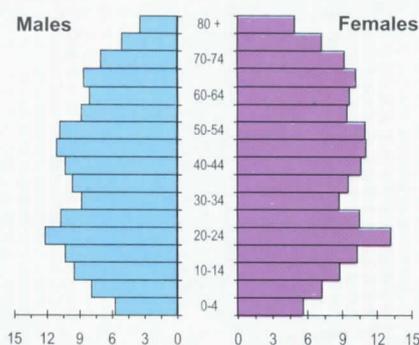
beverages industries dominate the economic structure. One of the biggest sugar plants in Bulgaria is situated in Gorna Oryahovitsa. Machine tool engineering and metal-processing come next (in Veliko Tarnovo, Gorna Oryahovitsa, and Debelets). Gorna Oryahovitsa, Pavlikeni, and Strazhitsa are home to ceramic production. The chemical industry is represented by large enterprises in Svishtov and Veliko Tarnovo.

Thanks to the rich agrarian and environmental potential there is a well-developed agricultural sector, with vegetable growing the most important sector. Crops, sunflower and sugar beat are grown in the northern plains. Cattle are reared both for meat and milk production.

Major transit routes dissect the region, including the road from Sofia to Varna and from Ruse to Stara Zagora. Gorna Oryahovitsa is a major railway junction for Northern Bulgaria, as the Sofia-Varna and Ruse-Stara Zagora-Podkova rail lines intersect here. The airport complex near Gorna Oryahovitsa is used for charter flights.

In addition to numerous high schools and a range of vocational schools, the Veliko Tarnovo University is the second oldest Bulgarian university after the University of Sofia. Medical services are at a high level, with one regional and several district hospitals. Water supply in the region meets the needs of the population.

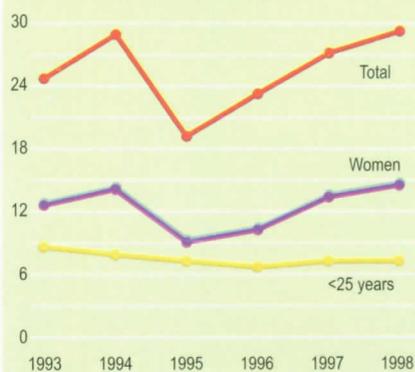
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	318,1
31.12.92	
Births	30,9
Deaths	35,6
Migration	-8,5
Population	304,8
31.12.98	

Unemployment (1 000)





Gabrovo

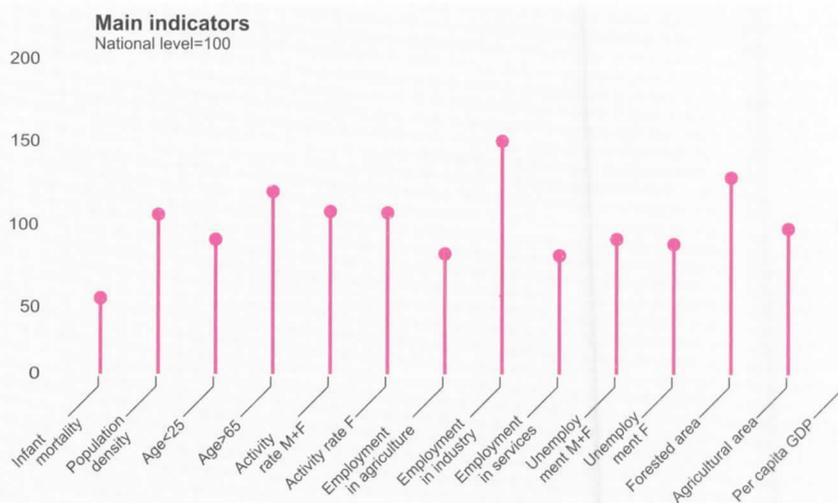
The smallest region

With the exception of Sofia (capital) this is the smallest region in Bulgaria in terms of area at 2 019 km², which represents only 1.8% of the country's area. Gabrovo is situated in the centre of Northern Bulgaria, bordering on the regions of Lovech, Veliko Tarnovo and Stara Zagora. The settlements in the four municipalities of Gabrovo region consist of the four municipal centres, one town that is not a centre of a municipality, 74 villages and numerous hamlets. This number of small settlements is typical for this part of the country and for the southern Balkan slopes. The regional centre, Gabrovo, is the largest town in the region, followed by Sevlievo. This part of Bulgaria has been inhabited since ancient times. The regional centre of Gabrovo emerged as an urban centre during the time of the Ottoman invasion. Its name was mentioned for the first time in the 16th century. During the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th century manufacturing began to develop rapidly there. Gabrovo merchants established offices in many European cities. In 1835, the first Bulgarian secular school opened its doors in Gabrovo. After the Liberation of Bulgaria (1878), the city turned into one of the largest industrial centres in the country with numerous textile, leather and other enterprises.

The relief is predominantly undulating and mountainous. Valleys such as the Sevlievo Valley offer good opportunities for agriculture. Black coal, marble, limestone and clay are the region's main natural resources. The climate is moderately continental with frequent temperature inversions in the valleys. The major rivers cutting across the region are the Yantra, Rositsa, Vidima and Dryanovska. One of the biggest dams in Bulgaria, the Alexander Stamboliyski Dam, has been built on the river Yantra. Soil is less fertile in the hilly Balkan mountain range areas, although there are many large pastures, used for animal-rearing.



Small Balkan towns throughout the region display the typical architecture of the Bulgarian Renaissance. Photo by Peter Dimov



High employment rate and low unemployment level

Gabrovo region is highly attractive for investors. It has an abundant supply of skilled labour, a variety of production facilities and a heterogeneous economy. Furthermore, its environment is well-preserved and there are valuable architectural and ethnological sites (Bozhentsi, Tryavna, Dryanovo, Etara). The famous Dryanovo Monastery, commemorating the Bulgarians' struggle for national liberty in the 19th century, is situated here too.

The well-developed economic structure of the region is reflected in the favourable employment indicators. The unemployment rate at 14% is one of the lowest nationally and is 2% lower than the Bulgarian average. A note-worthy

feature is the high percentage of employment in industry, 46% of the total, which is the highest among the regions. Nevertheless, the region faces a number of problems, the most significant ones concerning the negative natural growth due to the ageing of the population, and depopulation of the mountainous areas. In these zones, substantial areas of arable land are being abandoned and becoming overgrown.

In order to continue to attract local and foreign investors, the right conditions for the management of these processes have to be created, which should then generate sufficient guarantees for the future successful development of this part of the country.



against 67.7% nationally. The economy has a predominantly industrial bent, the major sectors being processing industries, textile and knitwear industries. Other manufacturing branches include electric hoists, cables and plastic products. A modern enterprise for the manufacture of sanitary fittings, as well as a factory for the manufacturing and repair of railway wagons and carriages are situated in the vicinity of Gabrovo. Due to the significant foreign investment in plants in Sevlievo the region is in second place in Bulgaria in terms of its per capita investment.

Stock-breeding is the principal agricultural activity, mainly in the mountain areas, while cereal crops are grown in the plains.

The good road network is evident from the higher than average road density here at 0.53 km per km² as against 0.34 km per km² nationally. The region is crossed by two major roads - the Sofia-Varna and Veliko Tarnovo - Stara Zagora roads, as well as by the railway line which runs from Ruse via Gorna Oryahovitsa to Stara Zagora and Podkova.

Gabrovo is one of Bulgaria's main university centres, with a Technical University which has several faculties there. There are 65 schools in the municipality of Gabrovo.

Medical care is better than average thanks to the hospital and clinics based here and the available skilled medical staff. On average, one doctor cares for 360 inhabitants as against 396 nationally, and there are 7.7 hospital beds per 1 000 inhabitants.

Which regions are similar to Gabrovo region?

Population density:

76 inhabitants per km²
 Herefordshire (UK)
 Magnisia (EL)
 Jihlavsky (CZ)

Age structure:

27 % under 25
 Arnsberg (D)
 Limousin (F)
 Veneto (I)

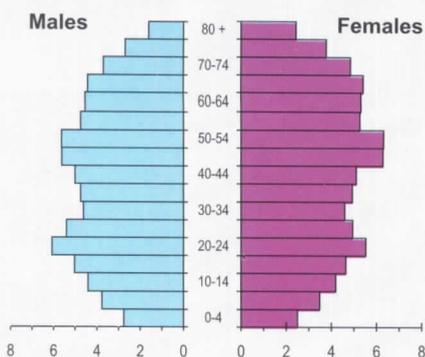
Land use:

38 % forest
 Extremadura (E)
 Toscana (I)
 Brasov (RO)

Developed economy with considerable investment

Gabrovo is the smallest region in terms of its population size and is inhabited by 154 000 people (1.9% of the national total). Its density is equal to the national average. The number of inhabitants is diminishing due to the very low birth rate and to the large share of an ageing population. Infant mortality is, however, considerably below the national average. With an active population of 52.8% and a high employment rate (almost 300 per 1 000 inhabitants) the region is in a better position than the rest of the country (which has an employment rate of 249 per 1 000). The higher level of urbanisation is evident from the fact that 77% of the population are urban dwellers as

Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	161,9
Births		8,0
Deaths		17,0
Migration		1,4
Population	31.12.98	154,3

Unemployment (1 000)





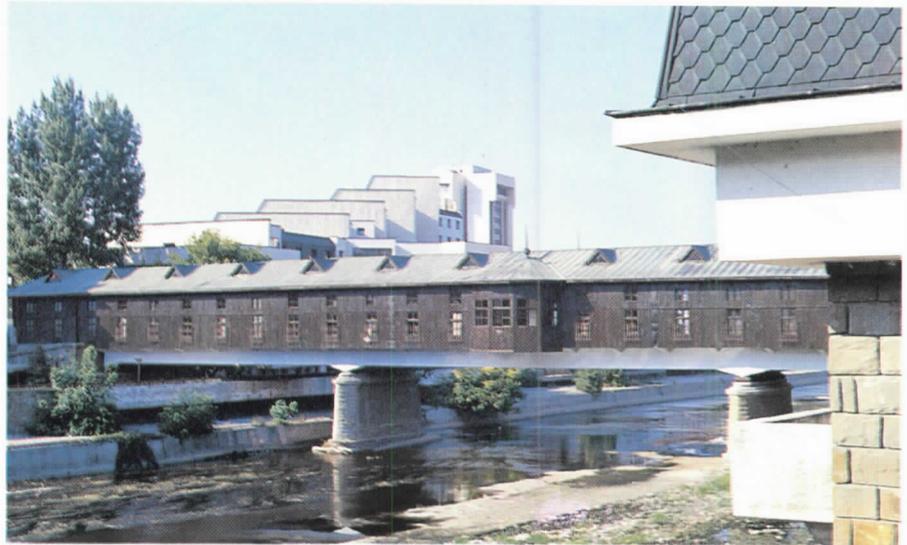
Lovech

Between Danube and Balkan mountains

Lovech region extends over the middle part of the lower Balkan and the northern slopes of the Balkan mountain ranges. With an area of 4 128 km², it is one of the country's medium-sized regions. Lovech comprises 8 municipalities and borders the regions of Pleven to the north, Gabrovo and Veliko Tarnovo to the east, Plovdiv to the South and Sofia and Vratsa to the west. The relief is predominantly undulating and mountainous. The abundance of natural resources such as limestone and clay has spurred production of bricks, tiles, and pottery. Although the town of Lovech is the main focal point for transport and industry, it is still one of the smallest regional centres in Bulgaria.

In ancient times the region was inhabited by the Thracian tribes. After the Roman conquest of the Balkan peninsula, the territory became a part of the Roman province of Mizia. A medieval castle was built at Lovech on the remnants of the Roman road station at Melta, and one of the main economic and trade centres in the region grew up around it in the 15th to 18th centuries.

The main rivers in the region are relatively small, but this is compensated for by the natural water springs, the largest of which is the well-known Glava Panega. These vast water resources allow the region to supply water to the adjacent region of Pleven. The soil is not particularly fertile and is suitable mainly for fruit growing. However, the soil is more fertile in the river valleys of the northern plains, where crop production is highly developed. The area is densely forested, with forests covering 35% of the territory.



The unique covered bridge over the Osam River was built by the famous Renaissance master Kolyo Ficheto. Photo by Peter Dimov



Healthy climate, unspoilt nature

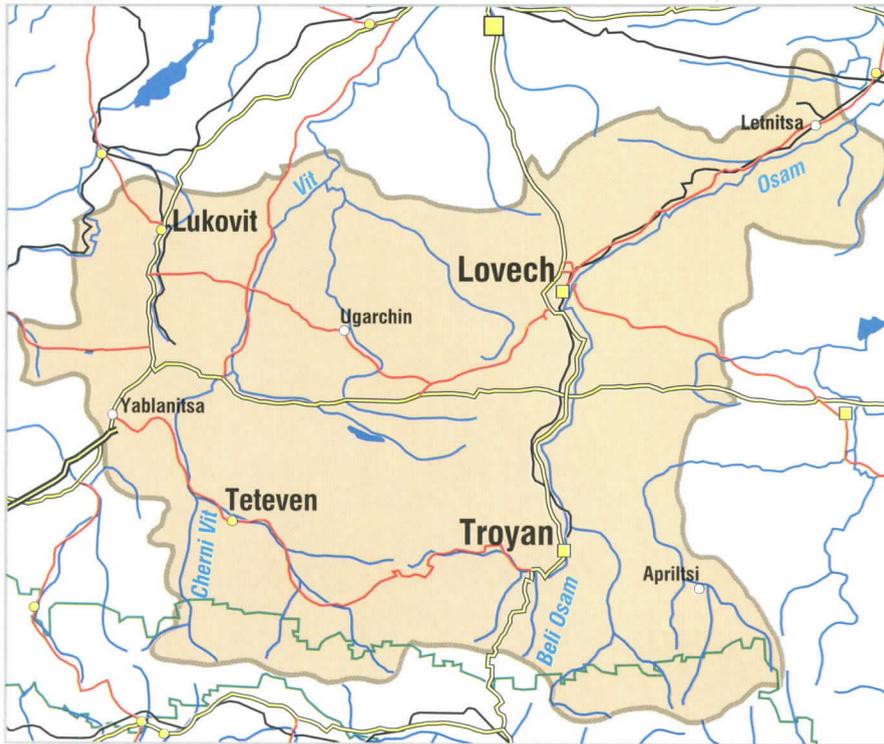
The well-preserved nature and healthy mineral water are among the main positive aspects of the region. The environment is relatively undamaged by industrial pollution. One of Bulgaria's largest areas under environmental protection is situated in this region, namely the Central Balkan National Park. The mineral water springs at Shipkovo and Slivek villages, coupled with the mountain resorts of Ribaritsa, Teteven, and Apriltsi, encourage the development of tourism in the region.

Lovech is also noted for its cultural and ethnic heritage. In the majority of the region's towns, architectural monuments of considerable historical and ethnic significance are preserved. Outstanding among the numerous historical and architectural landmarks is

the Troyan monastery, which is one of the four main monasteries of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Other cultural attractions are the architectural centre of Varosha and the famous bridge by Kolyo Ficheto, both in the town of Lovech.

One of the region's weak points is the lack of resources for industry and the high level of unemployment. The industrial sector suffers from a lack of investment activity. The completion of the restructuring process of the local economy and the improvement of the region's infrastructure would help to overcome these difficulties in the long run.

The poorly developed road network is another disadvantage of the region. The lack of quality roads, especially in



Mixed economy dominated by industry

The region is one of the country's smallest in terms of population, with 178 100 inhabitants, which amounts to 2.2% of the national total. It is sparsely populated as indicated by the population density ratio of 43, which is far below the national average of 74. The urban population comprises a smaller share of the total population than in Bulgaria as a whole. The population of the region is ageing rapidly, the chief factor behind this being the sustained decline in the birth rate in the period 1992-1999. The infant mortality rate in the region at 13.8 per 1 000 live births is slightly lower than the national average of 14.4. Overall, as with other regions in the country, Lovech suffers from a poor demographic structure and negative natural increase. The abundance of vast pastures in the lower Balkan and the Balkan mountains favours the development of cattle and sheep breeding. The share of the region's area that is cultivated, 33.6%, is less than the national average of 43.3%. Crops and vines are grown in the northern plain areas, while fruit and potato growing prevail in the mountainous regions. Although the region has a mixed economy, the dominant sector is the industrial one. However, no particular industry could be identified as a leader in the regional economy. Machine building in Lovech and Troyan, food industry in Lovech, Troyan, and Lukovit, wood processing in Teteven and Troyan, cement production in Zlatna Panega, and brick and tile manufacturing in Yablanitsa are the region's main industries. Despite Lovech's well-developed industry, the unemployment level of 19% is above the national average of 16%.

Which regions are similar to Lovech region?

Area:

4 128 km²

- Oberkarnten (A)
- Viborg amt (DK)
- Telsiai (LT)

Population density:

43 inhabitants per km²

- Aitoloakarnania (EL)
- Dordogne (F)
- Caras-Severin (RO)

Employment structure:

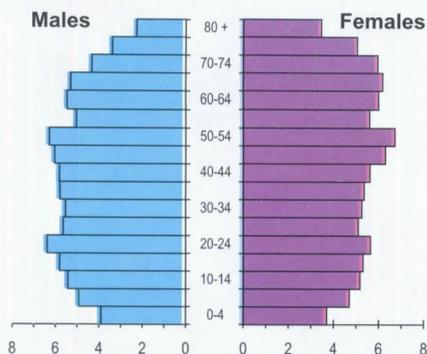
36 % industry

- Pardubicky (CZ)
- Dessau (D)
- Shropshire and Staffordshire (UK)

the southern part of the region, is due mainly to the mountainous terrain. Nevertheless, a part of the national road network crosses the region, the Sofia - Veliko Tarnovo - Varna highway. In comparison to the road network, the rail network performs only a complementary function and the low quality transport infrastructure could be improved through the reconstruction of some major roads.

The lack of land under cultivation is a disadvantage for the development of the region's agriculture, and a proper solution to compensate for this shortage would be to consolidate the existing scattered pieces of cultivated land.

Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	190,2
Births		11,2
Deaths		23,1
Migration		-0,1
Population	31.12.98	178,1

Unemployment (1 000)





Pleven

Core of Northern Bulgaria

Pleven region is situated in the central part of Northern Bulgaria and has an area of 4 337 km² (3.9% of the national territory). To the north, it borders the river Danube, to the east Veliko Tarnovo oblast, to the south Lovech oblast and to the west Vratsa oblast. Administratively, it is divided into 10 municipalities, within which there are 119 settlements, including 13 towns. Its population numbers 322 000 inhabitants (1998) or 3.9% of the national total.

The region extends over parts of the fertile Danube Plain and includes just the far northern reaches of the lower Balkan range. Its relief is accordingly predominantly flat. The lower streams of the rivers Iskar, Vit and Osam flow through the region. The karst springs near the city of Pleven, the village of Bohot and elsewhere are also part of the region's water supply. The moderately continental climate is characterised by cold winters and hot summers. Humus-rich soils alternate with alluvial meadows (in the plains) and the less fertile forest soils of the lower Balkan mountains.

In ancient times this area was inhabited by the Thracian tribe known as "the Mizians", which has given the name Mizia to all of Northern Bulgaria. There are numerous archaeological finds from the Roman Empire, including remains of the Roman town of Storgozia. In the Middle Ages, Pleven and the surrounding area belonged to the Bulgarian state. Under Ottoman rule the city was an important administrative, economic and garrison town. After the liberation of Bulgaria (1878) it grew into one of the most important urban centres in the country.

Limited deposits of oil and gas have been discovered and are now being extracted. Deposits of fire- and ceramic clay and limestone have considerable economic significance.



The Pleven Panorama is a monument to those who died for Bulgaria's liberation in 1877-1878.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Rich natural resources but environmental problems

Pleven region's potential in the field of agriculture is considerable due to the right mix of climatic conditions and soil type. Industrial capacity is available and there is well-developed oil and gas extraction. As far as the region's infrastructure is concerned, it has a good road and rail network, and its villages and towns are provided with the main services.

Some of the major problems worth mentioning are air pollution in the municipality of Nikopol, due to emissions produced by the Romanian city of Turnu Magulare, and the pollution of arable land caused by oil extraction.

Furthermore, the demographic structure of the population is deteriorating, and industry is operating below capacity and

with a reduced workforce.

Water supply is one of the problems faced by the region, as there is a grave shortage of both drinking water and water for irrigation.

Despite these drawbacks, Pleven region should continue to play an important role in the national economy in the future and it does possess the necessary prerequisites for further successful social and economic development.



ing dairy goods, meat and meat processing and leather goods.

In terms of foreign investment, the region ranks in 10th place and is close to the national average. Per capita GDP is slightly below the national average.

The economic restructuring and closure of some inefficient manufacturers has resulted in an increase in the unemployment rate (17.4%), a figure which is slightly higher than the average of 16%. The number of those employed accounts for 3.8% of the national total, while the employment rate per 1 000 inhabitants at 240 people is almost equal to the national average.

Plevna region is crossed by some of Bulgaria's most important railway and road routes, such as those to and from Varna, and Sofia. Road density at 0.31 km per km² is almost equal to the national average.

Medical services are provided by the Higher Institute of Medicine, a regional hospital in the city of Plevna and a network of health centres and clinics. There is one medical doctor per 492 inhabitants, as against 396 nationally. The region lags slightly behind in terms of its provision of hospital beds per 1 000 inhabitants.

Science and higher education are served by the Higher Institute of Medicine, the Fodder Research Institute and the Research Institute on Viticulture in Plevna, as well as the Air Force Academy in the city of Dolna Mitropolia. The regional centre has its own theatre, symphony orchestra, and numerous museum-related activities.

Which regions are similar to Plevna region?

Population density:
74 inhabitants per km²
Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok (HU)
Tirschenreuth (D)
Muhlviertel (A)

Land use:
79 % agriculture
Basse-Normandie (F)
Giurgiu (RO)
Hajdu-Bihar (HU)

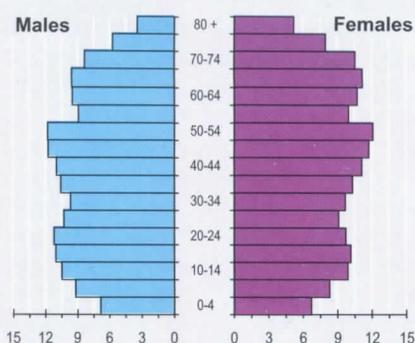
Employment structure:
31 % agriculture
Utena (LT)
Centru (RO)
Kriti (EL)

Oil extraction and industrial-agrarian economy

The region is characterised by negative natural population growth, which in turn is also reflected in the trend towards a decrease in the size of the population of active age. Infant mortality at 18.3 per 1 000 live births is above the average of 14.4.

Industry is the principal economic sector, with the main branches being oil processing, machine tools engineering, the canning industry, wine production and tobacco processing, all of which are of national significance. Agriculture is well developed and includes the cultivation of cereals and oil-bearing crops. Stockbreeding in the region is entirely in the hands of the private sector, produc-

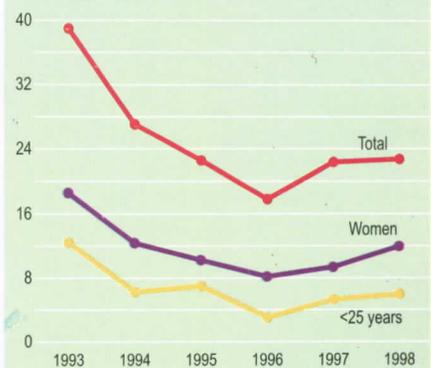
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	346,2
Births		20,8
Deaths		38,1
Migration		-6,2
Population	31.12.98	322,8

Unemployment (1 000)





Ruse

Gateway to Europe on the Danube

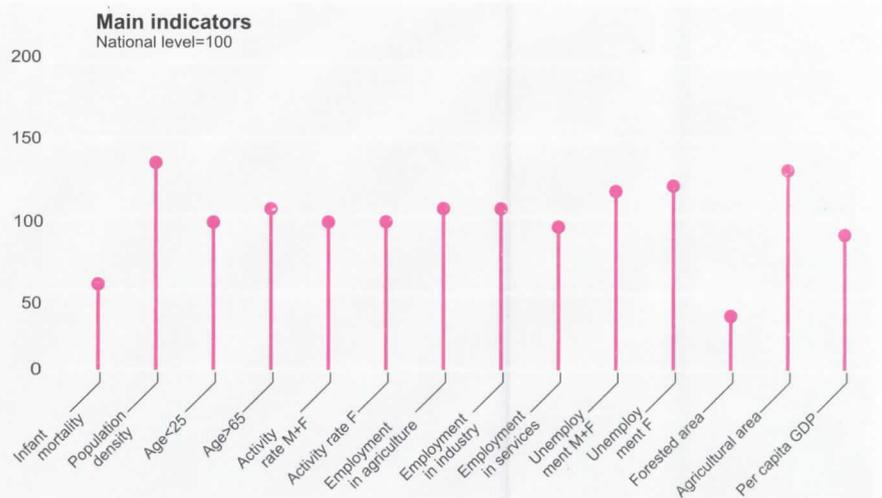
The region, with the city of Ruse as its regional centre, is situated in northern Bulgaria. It covers an area of 2 775 km² or 2.5% of the national territory. It borders the regions of Razgrad, Silistra, Targovishte, Veliko Tarnovo and the river Danube to the north. The population of the region is 278 000 inhabitants, or 3.4% of the national total, placing the region in 11th place of the 28 regions. The mean density at 100 inhabitants per km² is above average, as is its urban population at 68.8% as against 67.7% nationally. There are 83 settlements and 6 cities (Ruse, Byala, Dve Mogili, Vetovo, Borovo and Senovo) spread through 8 municipalities. Ruse is the biggest Bulgarian city and port on the river Danube.

The relief varies between undulating and flat and extends over parts of the Danube Plain and the Ludogorie area. This area has a rich historical past, as evinced by its numerous archaeological landmarks. It was inhabited by Thracian tribes and after the 1st century A.D. the Romans built a castle at Sextaginta Prista, marking the frontier of the Empire. After the founding of the Bulgarian state the city became a strong fortress as well as a trade and administrative centre. Archaeological remains from that time include the mediaeval city of Cherven and the Ivanovo Churches in the Rocks, which are under UNESCO protection. Under Ottoman rule, Ruse and its region was a major military, commercial, manufacturing and cultural centre. From 1864 the city served as headquarters of the Tuna Villaet (Danube region) of the Ottoman Empire. The construction in 1866 of the first railroad in Bulgaria from Ruse to Varna, contributed further to the economic development of the region.

The climate is moderately continental. The main rivers are the Yantra and Rusenski Lom. The region has few raw material deposits. Deposits of quartz sand, cladding limestone and kaolin have been found and exploited.



Bulgaria's largest port on the Danube River, at Ruse, stimulates the economic development of the whole region.
Photo by Peter Dimov



Transport, industry and agriculture

Ruse region features an advantageous transport and geographic location, and the only bridge in operation along the Bulgarian section of the river Danube is situated near Ruse. It serves the road and rail connections with Central and Eastern Europe. The region's favourable climate and soil conditions are beneficial to agriculture and one of the oldest agricultural experimental stations, providing scientific agro-technical services to the agrarian sector, is situated in the village of Slivo Pole. A skilled labour force, rich research potential, the ability to attract foreign investment, cross-border co-operation opportunities and conditions for the development of tourism are additional assets.

As well as being one of Bulgaria's largest industrial centres, the city of Ruse plays an important role in the

country's economic relations with abroad. There is a large oil refinery here, which does not operate to full capacity however. As a duty free zone has been established in the city, this has a positive impact on attracting foreign investors here.

Unemployment has increased as a consequence of the current restructuring of industry and agriculture, and since 1992 a decline in the size of the region's population and an increase in infant mortality have been noted. There are environmental problems relating to pollution of the Danube's water as well as cross-border air pollution. As a result of the latter problem, there has been an increase in the incidence of respiratory diseases and allergies. For this reason some inhabitants have migrated to other parts of the country.



industrial sectors comprises chemical and rubber industry, textile industry, and the manufacture of building materials.

Arable land covers 61% of the region's area, and a quarter of it is irrigated. Cereals, sunflowers, sugar beat, hemp, vineyards and orchards predominate. In addition to cattle, sheep and pig breeding, sericulture and apiculture also play a part in agriculture here.

3.4% of those gainfully employed nationally live in the region while the unemployment level at 18.8% is above average.

The length of the regional road network is 877 km and road density is below the national average. The importance of the Ruse-Varna railroad will increase with the growth of international transit traffic along European Corridor No. 7 (the river Danube) and the Ruse - Gorna Oryahovitsa railroad (part of European Corridor No. 9). The Danube Bridge was constructed in 1953 and allows for rail and road connections to Romania and other European countries. The city of Ruse has an international river port and a civil airport.

All settlements have electric and water connections. A total of 124 educational establishments, including a technical university, cover the region's needs from primary school to tertiary level. Numerous theatres, a TV studio, an art gallery, a philharmonic orchestra, museums, public libraries and cultural clubs are all found here.

Medical services are provided by several hospitals; one medical doctor caters for 456 inhabitants (above the national average of 396) and 8.0 beds are provided per 1 000 inhabitants.

Which regions are similar to Ruse region?

Land use:

- 11 % forest
- Olt (RO)
- Basse-Normandie (F)
- Weser-Ems (D)

Age structure:

- 30 % under 25
- Ionia Nisia (EL)
- Steiermark (A)
- Podravska (SI)

Employment structure:

- 32 % industry
- Umbria (I)
- Trier (D)
- Karlovarsky (CZ)

One of the most developed regions

A below average birth rate of 7.1 per 1 000 inhabitants, combined with a higher than average death rate, contribute to the declining population numbers. Infant mortality at 8.1 per 1 000 live births is substantially below the national average of 14.4, and is one of the lowest values among the 28 regions.

More than one half of those gainfully employed is engaged in industry. The energy sector is represented by one of the biggest thermal power plants in this country. The most important industrial sectors are machine tools engineering and metal processing (shipbuilding and ship repair), followed by the food and beverages industry. The range of other

Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population 31.12.92	288,8
Births	16,3
Deaths	28,6
Migration	0,6
Population 31.12.98	277,1

Unemployment (1 000)





North-East region

Cradle of the First Bulgarian State

The North-East is a region with a long history. The remnants of the necropolis at Varna confirm that this territory was at one time inhabited by one of the most ancient civilisations in the world. Between the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. the Hellenistic civilisation founded many settlements along the Black Sea coast, such as Odesos (Varna) and Kronos (Balchik).

In 681 the First Bulgarian State was established here. The remains of its first capital, Pliska, and the second one, Veliki Preslav, reveal the richness of cultural life at the dawn of the Bulgarian State. Veliki Preslav was the nation's spiritual and cultural centre. The monasteries, churches and buildings from that time reveal the extent to which large scale building and construction took place. The archeological relics, such as the Thracian tomb at Sveshtari (in the region of Targovishte), the Madara Horseman (Shumen) and the necropolis in Varna are UNESCO world heritage sites.

Administratively the region is split into 6 sub-regions, 49 municipalities and 943 settlements. The main regional centres are Varna, with 299 000 inhabitants, followed by Dobrich and Shumen.

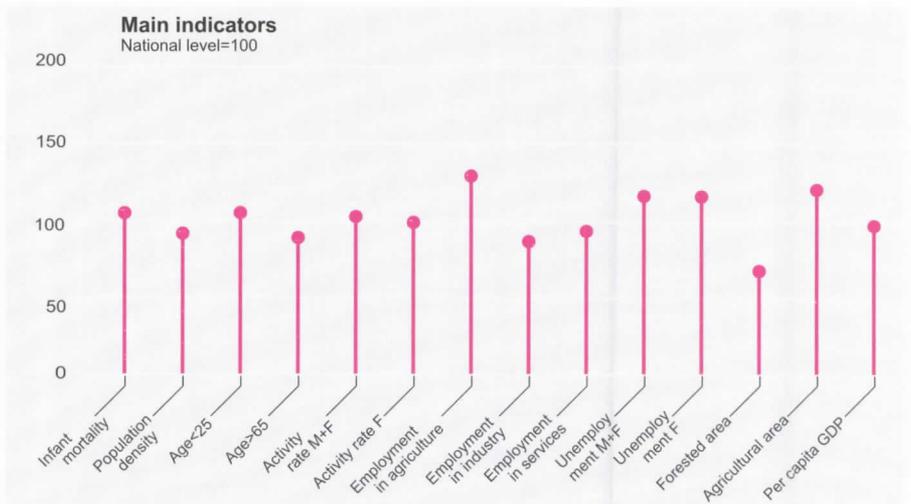
Covering the north-eastern part of Bulgaria, the region borders the North-Central and South-East regions to the west and south respectively. The northern border coincides with the Romanian frontier, on which Silistra port is situated. The eastern ridge of the Balkan mountains and the lower Balkans border the region to the south. This region is connected to the South-East region via numerous mountain passages. The Black Sea coast borders the region to the east, where many tourist resorts and ports are sited.

The famous Srebarna lake, which is one of Bulgaria's nature reserves, is located in this region.



The Madara Horseman symbolises the many civilisations and peoples who once lived here.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Access to the Danube River and the Black Sea

A strongly developed agricultural sector is the region's major advantage, crop production in particular flourishing due to the favourable climate and the region's vast plains. Value added from the region's agricultural sector to the national economy is second highest after the South-Central region. Overall, the output from crop production has turned the region into the country's breadbasket.

The region's geographic location is its second major asset, reflecting its good transport links and the opportunities it offers for future economic growth. With access to both the Danube River and the Black Sea, this should strengthen the region's role as a geopolitical centre

connecting the country with central Asia and with countries in the Black Sea region. Furthermore, parts of the 7th European traffic corridor cross the region along the Danube River, which is an important link to North-eastern Europe.

A further regional advantage is the well-developed tourist sector, as many resorts, famous both in Bulgaria and elsewhere in Europe, are situated on the Black Sea.

One of the region's major drawbacks is the substantial environmental damage that has been caused. The situation in the region of Varna is of particular concern, due to the concentration of chemical enterprises here. Furthermore, the



Which regions are similar to North-East region?

Area:

19 972 km²

- Puglia (I)
- Picardie (F)
- Dolnoslaskie (PL)

Land use:

67 % agriculture

- Bretagne (F)
- Basilicata (I)
- Fejer (HU)

Population density:

68 inhabitants per km²

- Trentino-Alto Adige (I)
- Castellon de la Plana (E)
- Jihozapad (CZ)

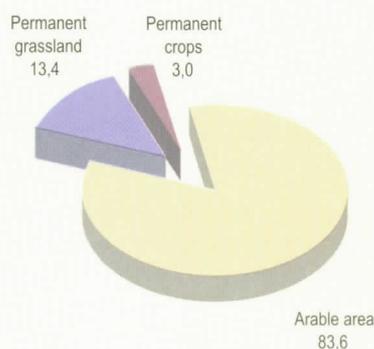
Agriculture - 1999

Number of private farms	367 484
Persons working in agriculture *	174 442
Total agricultural area (ha)	1 338 294
Total livestock	1 276 763
Sheep per 100 ha of total agricultural land	42,8
Pigs per 100 ha of total agricultural land	30,4
Cattle per 100 ha of total agricultural land	9,7
Main crops (1 000 tonnes)	
Wheat	1 115,8
Maize	594,7

* see explanatory notes

active tourist season also has a negative impact on ecological conditions. A high rate of unemployment has a negative influence on the migration balance, and has intensified the migratory flows to the major towns. The predominance of labour-intensive industries such as agriculture and low industrial development are also negative factors for the region's overall situation.

Agricultural land use in 1999 (%)



	Area	Population			Activity	Unemployment	Employment		
	km ²	1000	Inhabitants /km ²	Change %	%	%	Agriculture %	Industry %	Services %
	1998	1998	1998	1995-1998	1998	1998	1998	1998	1998
North-East	19 972	1 352	68	-1,9	51,2	19	34	26	40
Dobrich	4 724	226	48	-1,3	47,8	21	43	21	36
Shumen	3 381	216	64	-1,9	51,1	22	35	28	37
Varna	3 820	445	117	-1,4	52,3	14	19	31	50
Razgrad	2 638	166	63	-2,1	53,7	20	41	26	32
Silistra	2 851	154	54	-3,4	48,7	17	47	20	34
Targovishte	2 559	145	57	-2,5	52,9	23	45	23	33



Distinct natural zones

The North-East region covers 19 972 km² or 18% of the country's total area. The relief is varied, tending towards plains and hillsides. Vast valleys stretch down to the steep and severely eroding banks of the Danube River. While the relief of the Dobrudzha plain is largely flat, canyon-shaped valleys are also a scenic part of the landscape. The south is dominated by the eastern ridges of the Balkan mountains. Eastwards, the Black Sea coast has beautiful scenery, its deeply indented relief being the perfect prerequisite for both the building of many ports and the development of tourism.

While the North-East region's climate is mainly influenced by the moderate continental belt, the climate in the region's eastern parts is mainly determined by the impact of the Black Sea. The low annual precipitation here, below 500 mm, has led to artificial irrigation of agricultural areas. The average annual temperature is around 11- 12°C, being higher along the Black Sea coast and in the areas close to the Danube River.

The region has limited water resources. As a result, a substantial part of the population in the Dobrudzha Plain and Ludogorie area are still subject to water rationing. Most of the region's water is supplied by the Kamchia, Batova and Danube Rivers. The Fishek, Ticha and Konevo artificial lakes, which are built on the Kamchia River, are very important for the regional economy. The rivers in Ludogorie and Dobrudzha, used for household water supply, frequently dry up in the summer, but this shortage is compensated for by underground water deposits. The mineral water pumped at the thermal springs at Provadia and Devnya is also an important natural resource.

Black soil in the Ludogorie and Dobrudzha Plain is the most fertile soil in the region, and large quantities of crops are grown here. The region has the largest share of arable land nationally, accounting for 83.5% of its total agricultural area.

Ore and minerals deposits are quite limited, the most significant being the deposits of manganese ore in the region of Obrochishte. Substantial foreign investment was devoted to the extraction of natural gas from the Black Sea in recent years.

Main enterprises

Name	Activity
Ad Parahodstvo Balgarski Morski Flot	Maritime transport
Ad Varnenska Korabostroitelnitsa	Ship-building and repair
Ad Antibiotik	Pharmaceutical products
Ad Pristanishte Varna	Cargo handling
Ad Kitka	Glass manufacturer
Agropolihim	Fertilizers and nitrogen compounds
Ad Solvey Sodi	Chemical manufacturer
Ad Druzha Stil	Clothing manufacturer
Ad Diamant	Glass manufacturer
Ad Albena-Stil	Clothing manufacturer

Slight population decline

At the end of 1998, the region's population of 1.35 million people accounted for 16.4% of the national total. Its average density of 68 people per km² is slightly below the national average of 74. The highest density, 117 people per km², is recorded in the municipality of Varna. In contrast, the municipalities close to the Romanian border and in the Eastern Balkan mountains are sparsely settled (as low as 20 people per km²).

Some 62.4% of the population is urban, below the national average of 68.0% and the second lowest figure for this indicator. The most heavily urbanised areas are the regions of Varna and Dobrich, while the rural population reaches its highest figure of around 50% in the regions of Silistra and Razgrad.

Over the 1995-1998 period, the region experienced a decline in its population of around 2%, predominantly due to the intense migratory flow to the bordering regions. This is a result of economic hardship in the region, which is mainly caused by the high unemployment level. A further contributory factor is the negative natural increment. However, the birth rate at 8.5 per 1 000 inhabitants is second highest nationally, boosted by the high rate in the region of Varna (9.4). The death rate at 13.9 per 1 000 inhabitants is slightly below the national figure.

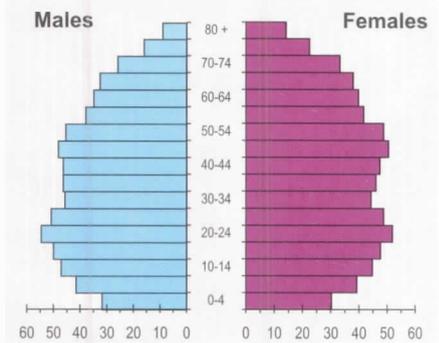
Although migratory flows and the negative natural increase have led to an ageing population, the age structure is favourable, and is better only in the neighbouring South-East region. The population below the age of 25 accounts for 32.4%, which is higher than the national average of 31.0%. In contrast, the share of those aged 65 and over is 14.1%, which is the lowest figure nationally.

Infant mortality, at 15.1 per 1 000 live

births, is slightly higher than the national average of 14.4. This is due to the relatively poor health care services in some municipalities in the Ludogorie area and in the Eastern Balkan mountains.

Ethnically, the region's population is varied. The share of the Turkish minority is 22.6%, which is more than twice the national average. This is primarily due to the large share of Turks in the region of Razgrad, amounting to 47.5%. The share of gypsies at 5.3% is one of the highest nationally, being higher only in the North-West region.

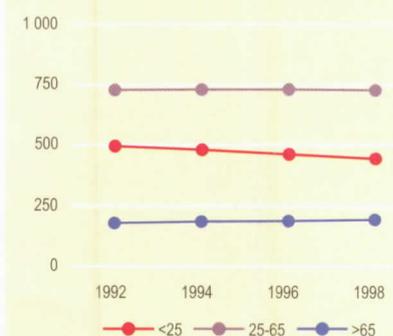
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



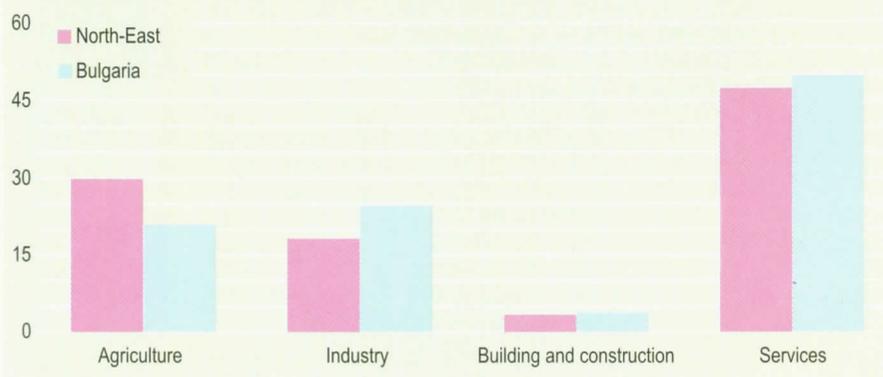
Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population 31.12.92	1395,5
Births	81,4
Deaths	128,4
Migration	3,8
Population 31.12.98	1352,2

Population by age-groups (1 000)



Gross value-added by sector - 1998 (%)



The country's granary

The economy of the North-East region is predominantly oriented towards agriculture. While the region generated 16.0% of Bulgaria's total GDP, per capita GDP is slightly lower than the national average. The value added derived from the agricultural sector in the regional economy is somewhat above 30%, while the share of industry at 19% is lower than the national average of 25%.

As Bulgaria's second main agricultural region after the South-Central region, 23% of the country's total value added from agriculture is generated here. The region has the largest share of arable land in the country, 83.5% of its agricultural area. Its plains and favourable climate also benefit agricultural development. Wheat and oats dominate, although soya beans and lentils are also produced. Two-thirds of the fields are used for crops but the region is also one of the main producers of vegetables, melons and watermelons. Cattle breeding flourishes due to the plentiful supply of fodder and the region leads in terms of overall pig and sheep

numbers nationally. A well-developed agricultural branch is fishing along the Danube River and in the Black Sea.

In contrast to the intense agricultural sector, industry contributes only 11.8% to the country's value added from this sector, the second lowest figure of the six regions. The major industrial branches are the chemical and food industry. Machine, glass and china manufacturing are also well represented. The leading role of the chemical industry reflects the presence of large chemical enterprises, namely Sodi in Devnya and Antibiotik in Razgrad. The textile industry also plays a part in the region's economy.

The food industry comprises more than one-quarter of total industrial production. The major products are milk, meat and margarine (Dobrich), the latter being the only enterprise of its kind the country.

Bulgaria's largest thermal electric plant is located near Varna. Nevertheless, the share of the energy sector in the regional economy is negligible compared to other regions.

Due to the extensive natural and cultural resources, the services sector is highly developed, contributing 15% to Bulgaria's value added from this branch. The long beaches and the numerous cultural attractions have stimulated tourism in the region of Varna. The main tourist centres are the renowned Zlatni Pyasatsi and Albena resorts.

Regional drawbacks comprise the economic problems of the country, the slow privatisation process and the decrease in industrial production.

High wages in agriculture

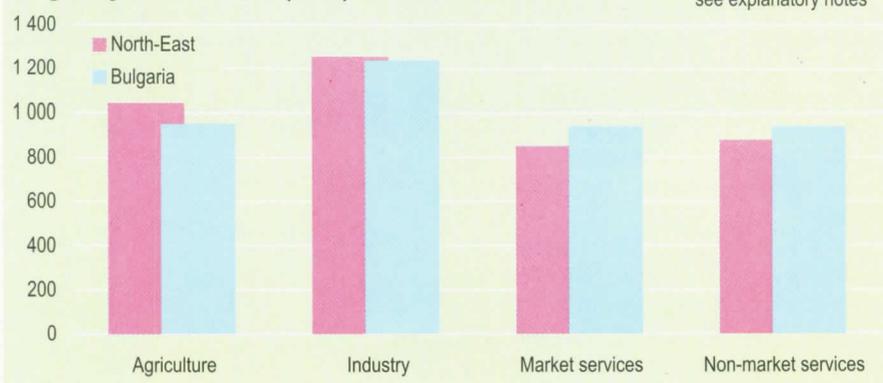
Just as in the whole country, the crisis in 1997 caused substantial fluctuations in real wages.

The average annual wage at the end of 1998 is around 2% lower than the national average, but is higher only in the South-West and South-East regions. In contrast, wage levels in the neighbouring South-East region are around 6% higher than here. Overall, the region's specialisation in labour-intensive industries, such as agriculture, keeps average wages lower. However, higher wages in the chemical industry here have partially compensated for this.

Nevertheless, the average wage in agriculture is the highest among the six regions, due to the well-developed nature of this sector. The region is also close to average in terms of wages in the market and non-market services. Wages in the industrial sector are slightly higher than the national figure.

More than half of all household income comes from wages and salaries. However, the share of income from private business is the highest nationally. A note-worthy feature here is also the part played by property rental in household income, which is mainly derived from the active tourist sector.

Wages by sector - 1998 (ECU) *





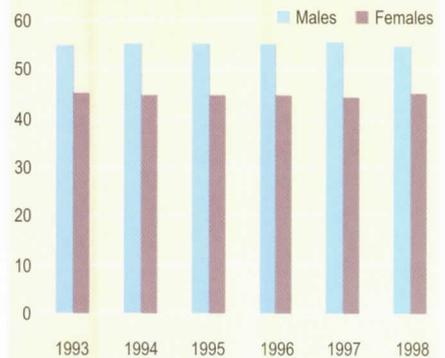
Average employment and unemployment

At 51.2%, the activity rate in the region is slightly above the national average of 50.4%, and is, in fact, the second highest figure after the South-West region. Some 16.4% of the country's active population resides in this region. Overall, as measured by the main indicators, the region is close to average. However, the dominant role of agriculture has had an impact on its employment structure. On the one hand, the agricultural sector employs the greatest number of people, 33.8% here as against 26.2% nationally. Furthermore, the number of employees in agriculture is substantially greater than that in industry, and the difference is greatest here. A peculiarity of the employment structure here and in the neighbouring South-East region is the low level of employment in industry and the relatively high employment rate in market services, mainly due to the strong tourist sector along the Black Sea coast. The distribution of employment in the other sectors is similar to the national pattern. The unemployment rate at 18.5% is higher than the national average of 16.0%. Nevertheless, it is lower only in

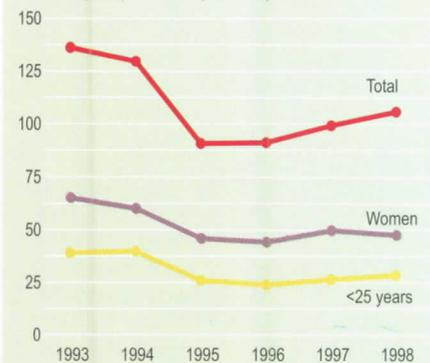
the more developed South-West and South-Central regions. The unemployment rate has followed the national tendency to increase since 1995, as during the transition period many workers were laid off from the industrial sector. The decrease in employment in market services also contributed to this negative trend.

Male and female unemployment rates equal each other at 18.5%, which is above the national average of 16% for men and women. The unemployment rate of those aged 25 or under is 39.1%, which is higher than the national average of 36.0%. This rate had been consistently decreasing from 1993 to 1997, reaching 36.9% at the end of that period, but jumped back to 39.1% in 1998. The long-term unemployment rate has also followed a downward trend since 1995, reaching 49.8% in 1998. Although this figure is the lowest among the regions, its high level reveals the lack of job opportunities both in the region and in Bulgaria as a whole.

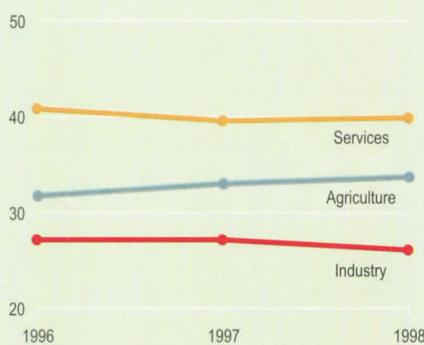
Resident employment by sex (%)



Unemployment (1 000)



Employment by sector (%)



Employment by age groups - 1998 (%)

	< 25 years	25-54 years	≥ 55 years
Men	10	80	11
Women	9	87	4
Total	9	83	8

Bulgaria's gateway to the sea

The region is one of the major transport centres in the country, thanks to its favourable geographic location. The extensive use of all types of transport in this region is reflected in the predominant role of transport in the services sector.

Sea transport is the most important branch of the transport sector. North-East region is a clear leader in terms of tonnage of goods loaded, this figure being almost double that of the South-East region. The majority of the ferryboat connections to Georgia pass through the region of Varna. Furthermore, some of the country's major ports are concentrated in the area around Varna Bay, the most important ones being the ports of Varna, Varna-West and Balchik. Rivers are also used to transport goods, the main centres being Silistra and Tutrakan.

Transport by road is reasonably well served here too. No fewer than 19% of all roads in the country are found in this region and the density of the road network is 360 km per 1 000 km². Some 72 km of highways, or 23% of the nation-

al total, cross the region. In terms of vehicle numbers, the region is in third place among the six regions. The main routes are the Varna-Shumen-Targovishte road and the Varna-Burgas road.

The first railway track in the country was built here in 1866, running from Ruse to Kaspichan and on to Varna. Other important rail routes are the Varna-Ruse and Varna - Gorna Oryahovitsa - Sofia lines.

In terms of goods and passenger traffic by air, the region is outpaced only by the South-West region. Around 24% of all passengers were embarked here. The major airport is sited in the region of Varna, while there are two other airports in Silistra and Targovishte.

Communications - 1998

	North-East	Bulgaria
Length of road in km per km ²	0,33	0,31
Length of road in km per 1000 population	4,92	4,17
Telephone connections per 1000 population	375	387

Number of pupils - 1999

	Total
Pre-school	38 054
Primary	70 674
Lower secondary	61 914
Higher secondary (vocational/general)	51 554
Tertiary (higher education)	42 630
Total	264 826

Health care - 1998

	North-East	Bulgaria
Hospitals	35	276
Doctors per 10 000 population	25,5	25,3
Hospital beds per 10 000 population	75,0	70,7

Environmental problems on Danube and Black Sea

Damage to the environment is one of the main problems which this region faces. Environmental conditions have worsened substantially in the border region of Silistra and in the Varna Bay area, due to the cross-border air and water pollution from Romania. The highest emissions of ammonia and second highest levels of sulphur oxides occur here, due mainly to the concentration of chemical enterprises in and around the region. A further grave problem is that arising from pollution from the major rivers which flow into the Black Sea. Moreover, due to intensive fishing, the number of fish has decreased considerably in recent years. The ecological balance has also been disturbed by the intense development of the tourist sector in this region.

At 80 litres per capita per day, the consumption of water in the region is lower

than the national average, reflecting the substantial share of the population which has water restrictions imposed upon it (21.3%). The situation in the region of Dobrich is of particular concern, since the entire population faces water restrictions. The only areas with a regular water supply are the regions of Razgrad and Silistra. Seasonal influxes of tourists only worsen this situation.

The gas pipeline from the Ukraine, which connects to the national pipeline at Devnya, crosses the North-East region. The telecommunications network is relatively well developed, the region having 16% of the total telephone lines in the country.

Strong cultural development

The North-East region was one of the first areas in south-eastern Europe to undergo a process of urbanisation, which has strongly influenced its cultur-

al development.

Educational establishments are numerous here, with over 800 academic institutions, among which are 7 universities and 10 colleges. The main academic centres are the Higher Institute for National Economics and the Military Naval Academy, the latter being the only one in Bulgaria. The region is in third place in terms of the number of students, with 16% of all students enrolled here.

The health care sector consists of 35 hospitals and a total of 10 000 hospital beds. Some 17% of all Bulgaria's doctors are resident in this region, with one doctor serving 393 patients, which almost equals the national average of 396.

There are 14 theatres, 35 museums and 32 cinemas in the region. The main cultural centre is Varna, where various annual events are held, the most important of these being the ballet and the music festivals.



Varna

The maritime heart of the country

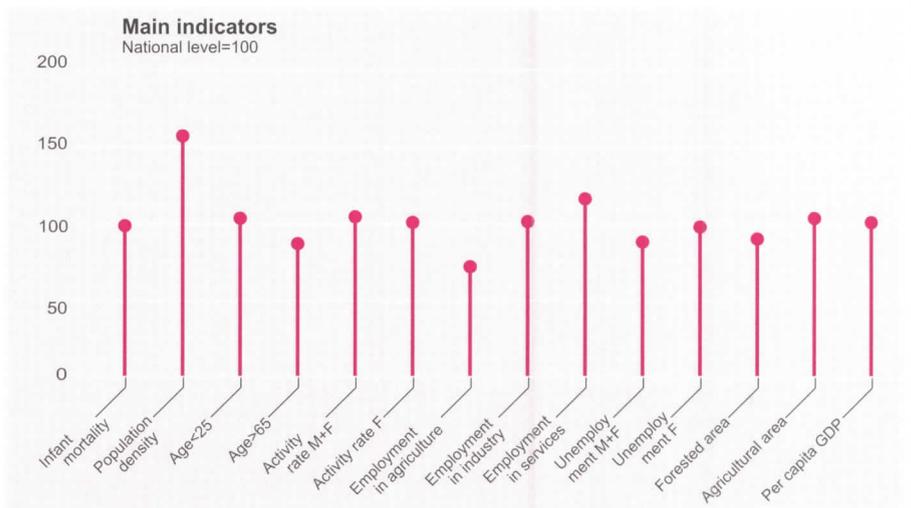
Varna region, with the city of Varna as its administrative centre, is situated in Northeastern Bulgaria. Within its 12 municipalities, there are 157 settlements, including 9 cities. With a total area of 3 820 km², representing just 3.45% of the national territory, Varna Region ranks among Bulgaria's medium-sized regions. It borders Burgas region to the south, Dobrich region to the north and the Black Sea to the east. In population terms, Varna region's 445 000 inhabitants, equivalent to 5.4% of the national total, make it the 3rd largest of Bulgaria's 28 regions. The average population density at 117 inhabitants per km² is well above the national average (74 inhabitants per km²). Although the natural population growth is negative (a higher death rate than birth rate), this trend is less marked here than elsewhere in Bulgaria, and the age structure of the population is somewhat better than the national situation. Infant mortality is below average, and the urban population accounts for over three-quarters of all inhabitants. The relief is undulating. It extends over several plateaux and contains a number of archaeological landmarks, including the Halcolite necropolis, which is over 8 000 years old. In the 6th century B.C., the Greeks colonised the Black Sea littoral and founded the settlement of Odessos (present-day Varna). During the period of Ottoman rule, the city and the region functioned as an important manufacturing, trade and military centre.

The climate is moderately continental with some influence from the sea. The major rivers are the Kamchia and the Provadiyska.

Explored mineral deposits comprise quartz sand, rock-salt, limestone, manganese ore, natural gas and the mineral springs at Varna.



Zlatni Pyasatsi, one of Varna's many resorts, also attracts visitors from western Europe.



Advantageous geographical location

Varna region has an advantageous geographical location, situated as it is on the Black Sea. Climatic conditions are favourable for the development of resorts and for many types of recreational activities. The resort complexes of Zlatni Pyasatsi (Golden Sands), St. Konstantin and Elena, numerous holiday homes and camp sites have been built along the Black Sea littoral. The natural phenomenon known as Pobitite Kamani is also situated not far from Varna. Furthermore, fertile soils along the littoral encourage agricultural production. Varna region also possesses a skilled labour-force and opportunities for attracting foreign investment and implementing cross-border co-operation with countries in the Black Sea-Caspian Sea

basin. The transport infrastructure is also reasonably well developed.

Nevertheless, as a result of the ongoing restructuring of industry and agriculture, the number of unemployed people has grown. Since 1992, there has been a clear trend that the size of the population is decreasing. Some environmental problems have been noted in and around the industrial complex at Varna-Devnya.

A number of landslides have occurred along the coast recently, which suggests a serious unfavourable natural process has set in which may require either extensive coastal defence works to protect against erosion or reconsideration of land use in this fragile zone.



Which regions are similar to Varna region?

Population density:
117 inhabitants per km²
Kronach (D)
Sankt Polten (A)
Brasov (RO)

Land use:
27 % forest
Dessau (D)
Midi-Pyrenees (F)
Swietokrzyskie (PL)

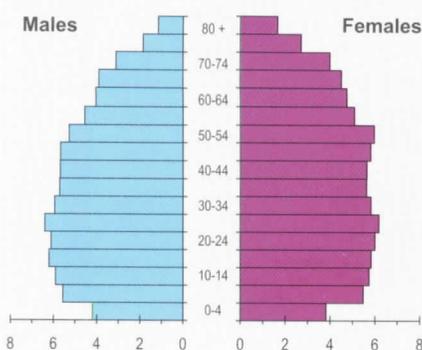
Employment structure:
50 % services
Dytiki Ellada (EL)
Banskobystricky (SK)
Marche (I)

Developed industry and famous resorts

Varna region has its own power generation capacity and the utility company Varna TPP is one of the largest in the country. British Gas has also discovered petroleum deposits in the region. Any regular exploitation of this resource should meet the city's demand for many years ahead. Industry is represented by machine tool engineering and metal processing (ship-building and ship-repair, the chemical industry, food and beverages production, cement production and the textile industry. Till now, the region has been one of Bulgaria's largest recipients of foreign investment. Capital investment has already been made by Belgium,

Turkey and other countries. Arable land accounts for 46% of the total area, with the main crops being cereals, fruit and vegetables, viticulture, and oil-bearing crops. Stock-breeding is very diversified. While the relative shares of the population under and above active age is almost equal, and although the relative share of the active population of the total of inhabitants above 16 years of age is 52.3%, a downward trend has been noted. Some 5.6% of all Bulgarians with jobs are employed here, and the unemployment rate at 14.1% is below the national average. Varna region's 1 337 km of roads (of which 58 km are highways) give a density of 0.35 km per km². Among the major roads are the Ruse-Kaspichan-Varna and Sofia-Targovishte-Varna roads as well as the panoramic highway Constanza-Varna-Burgas-Istanbul. The first railway line in Bulgaria, built in 1886 from Varna to Ruse, crosses the region, as does the Sofia-Gorna Oryahovitsa-Varna line. Varna is an international commercial port with specialised berths and a ferry port from Varna to Ilychovsk (Ukraine). One of Bulgaria's three international airports is located in the city of Varna. All settlements are connected to both electricity and water networks. In addition to primary, secondary and vocational high schools throughout the region, Varna city has three universities (medical, economic and technical) and one military navy college. Media and cultural activities are centred here too. Medical services are provided by several hospitals, more than 140 clinics, health centres, and spas. One medical doctor caters for 354 inhabitants, which is below the national average of 396.

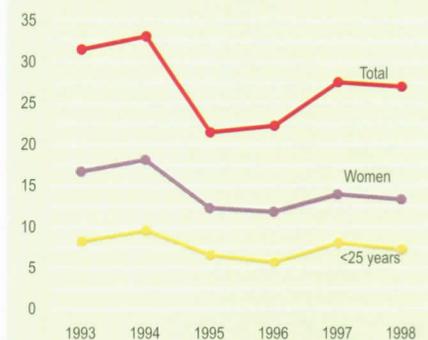
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population 31.12.92	463,1
Births	17,3
Deaths	39,3
Migration	4,1
Population 31.12.98	445,1

Unemployment (1 000)





Dobrich

Bordering the Black Sea

Dobrich region is situated in North-eastern Bulgaria and borders the regions of Silistra, Shumen and Varna. To the east, there is the Black Sea and to the north the state frontier with Romania. Dobrich covers an area of 4 724 km², representing 4.4% of the national territory. The region has a population of 227 000 inhabitants or 2.8% of the national total (1998), making it a medium-sized region in terms of population.

The city of Dobrich, which today is the main regional centre, has existed since the 15th century, when it developed as a busy trade and handicraft centre. The majority of the area belonged to Romania from 1913 till 1940. Today, in terms of its administrative set up, the region comprises 8 municipalities, with a total of 215 settlements, including 6 cities. The proportion of the population classified as urban is 63.9%, which is below the national average.

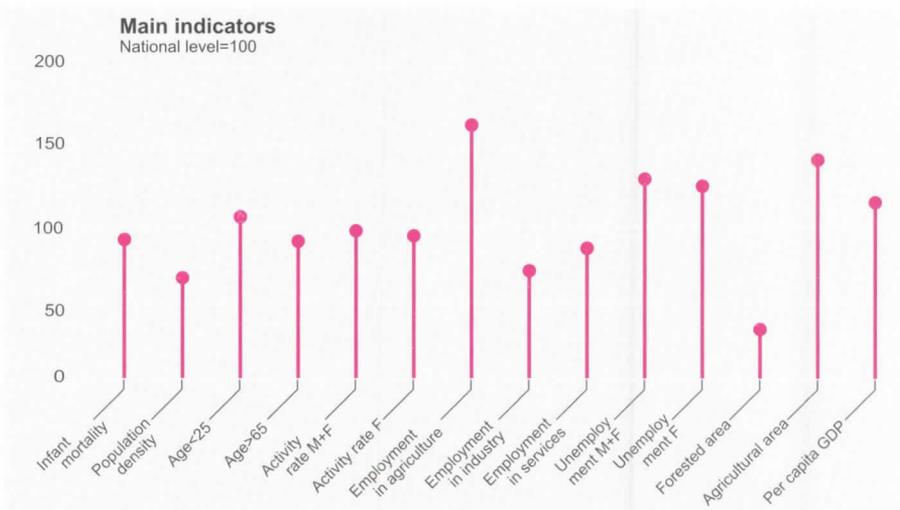
The relief varies between gently rolling hills and completely flat areas and extends across parts of the Ludogorie area and the Dobrudzha Plateau. Agriculture is the main occupation in the surrounding countryside.

There are deposits of oil at Tyulenovo and the region also boasts manganese ore, black coal (not exploited) and building materials, as well as mineral water springs. The climate is moderately continental with some maritime influence along the coastline to moderate temperatures. The rivers, such as the Batovska and Suha, are short and shallow. There are several lakes near the Black Sea, including Lake Shablansko and Lake Durankulashko.



Favourable natural conditions have turned the region into Bulgaria's breadbasket.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Favourable agrarian resources

In this part of the country there are large tracts of arable land and the right climatic conditions for more accelerated agro-economic development. Leases are now being granted on the many large plots of land. Furthermore, interest has already been expressed from abroad in launching cereal production in the region and considerable areas have by now been leased.

Despite the rich potential from the holiday resorts along the Black Sea, such as Albena which is one of the biggest coastal resorts in Bulgaria, the opportunities for the development of holiday and recreation facilities have not yet been fully exploited.

The grave water shortage is a very acute problem here, affecting not only drinking

water but also supplies of water for irrigation. As a result of water having to be pumped from extremely deep boreholes, the price per cubic metre of water is the highest in the country. The region has no energy base of its own, since the available deposits of black coal are not exploited because the great depth at which the coal seams lie makes it uneconomic to mine them.

Processes of erosion along the sea coast are another severe problem, requiring considerable investment for reinforcement of embankments along the shore.



Razgrad

Rich in history, poor in water

This region is situated in the western part of North-eastern Bulgaria and borders the regions of Ruse, Silistra, Shumen and Targovishte. It covers an area of 2 638 km² or only 2.4% of the national territory. It is divided into 7 municipalities, within which there are 106 settlements, including 6 cities. The population of the region is 166 000 inhabitants, representing just 2% of the national total. Razgrad region's population density of 63 inhabitants per km² is somewhat below the national average of 74.

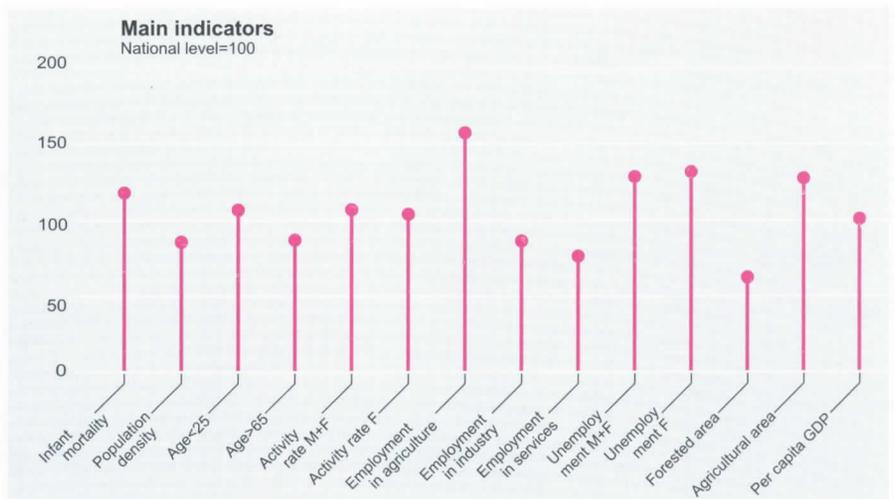
The old Roman settlement of Abritus was situated in this part of the country. Razgrad town, which is now the main regional and administrative centre, was mentioned in records from the 13th century. Under Ottoman rule it developed as a centre of handicrafts, trade and administration and in 1575 it was assigned administrative functions under the name Hrusgrad. This land is among the oldest areas on which, at the end of the 7th century (681), the Bulgarian state was founded.

As throughout Northern Bulgaria, the climate is a moderately continental one with relatively long and cold winters (the lowest temperature of -28.6°C was measured here in January 1993) and hot summers (the highest temperature ever recorded in Bulgaria, 40.6°C, was measured here in July 1916). Summer heat and insufficient precipitation lead to drought. There is a water shortage and it is only the Beli Lom River that carries a steady flow of water. This was the reason for the construction of numerous dams, the largest of which is Beli Lom. There are also 40 protected nature sites within the region. The region extends over the eastern parts of the hilly Danube Plain, making its relief somewhat undulating.



Crop-growing is a major part of the region's agricultural production.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Minerals and migration

The region possesses rich deposits of kaolin, clay, quartz sand and limestone. These will continue to form the core of its industrial production for some time in the future, serving as they do as the basis for the region's china, faience and glass industries. One of the first enterprises to be privatised in Bulgaria after 1990, the Maize Works, is situated in the city of Razgrad and has had Belgian capital invested in it. A number of pharmaceutical companies are also present in the region.

At the same time, the unemployment rate is high and there is a trend towards depopulation of rural areas. The deteriorating economic situation and resulting migration of younger people has overwhelmed the region's positive reproduction capacity (due to its age structure) in recent years, resulting in a negative demographic balance.

In addition to this, the region suffers from a water shortage because of the absence of larger rivers and the abundance of karst (limestone) terrain where surface water is scarce since rainfall disappears into the permeable bedrock. Underground water is also quite limited, therefore water has to be extracted by drilling wells at great depth, resulting in higher costs for supplying water.

Underground water is also quite limited, therefore water has to be extracted by drilling wells at great depth, resulting in higher costs for supplying water.



Which regions are similar to Dobrich region?

Area:

4 724 km²

Prahova (RO)
The Scottish Borders (UK)
Bas-Rhin (F)

Age structure:

14% over 65

Rhone-Alpes (F)
Brabant Wallon (B)
Riga (LV)

Population:

226 000 inhabitants

Harburg (D)
Alkmaar en omgeving (NL)
Covasna (RO)

Well-developed grain production

At 48 inhabitants per km², the average population density is below the Bulgarian average. The natural population growth is negative, although both infant mortality and the death rate are below the national average.

The relative share of the active population (above 16 years of age) is only 47.8%, and furthermore a downward trend has been noted. The number of those employed accounts for 2.8% of those employed nationally and the unemployment rate, at 20.7%, is above average.

Dobrich region has an industrial-agrarian economy. Industrial production focuses on the food and beverages sec-

tor, machine tool engineering and metal processing, the textile industry, and shoe-making.

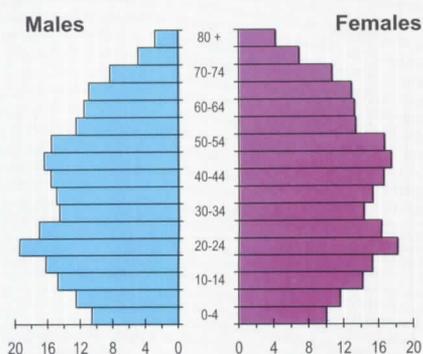
Arable land accounts for 72% of the region's total area, and only 3% of it requires irrigation. The main crop grown locally is grain (wheat), of which the region is the largest producer in Bulgaria. Cattle numbers are above average. The process of restoring land to its owners prior to collectivisation has been completed.

There are 1 641 km of roads here, giving a density of 0.35 km per km². The region is traversed by a number of main roads, including the Ruse-Dobrich-Varna route and the panoramic Constantza-Varna-Burgas-Istanbul highway. Part of the railway line linking Sofia with Madzhidia (in Romania) also crosses the region. The port of Balchik is used for freight and passenger transportation, while the port of Kavarna is only a fishing port. A natural-gas pipeline also runs through here.

All settlements in the region are connected to the national electricity system and to a water supply. There are two higher educational establishments here - a medical college and a faculty of the University of Shumen, as well as a theatre and museums. The Research Institute on Wheat and Sunflowers is in the city of General Toshevo.

Medical services are provided by one regional and several district hospitals, with on average 8.4 hospital beds per 1 000 inhabitants. One medical doctor caters for 365 people, which is slightly below the national average of 396.

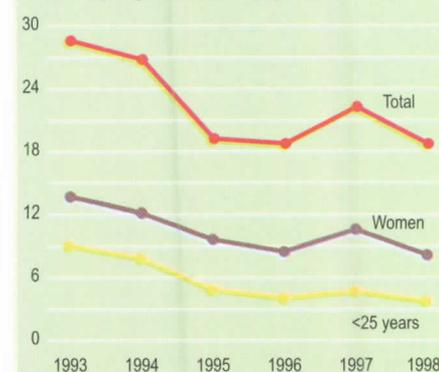
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)

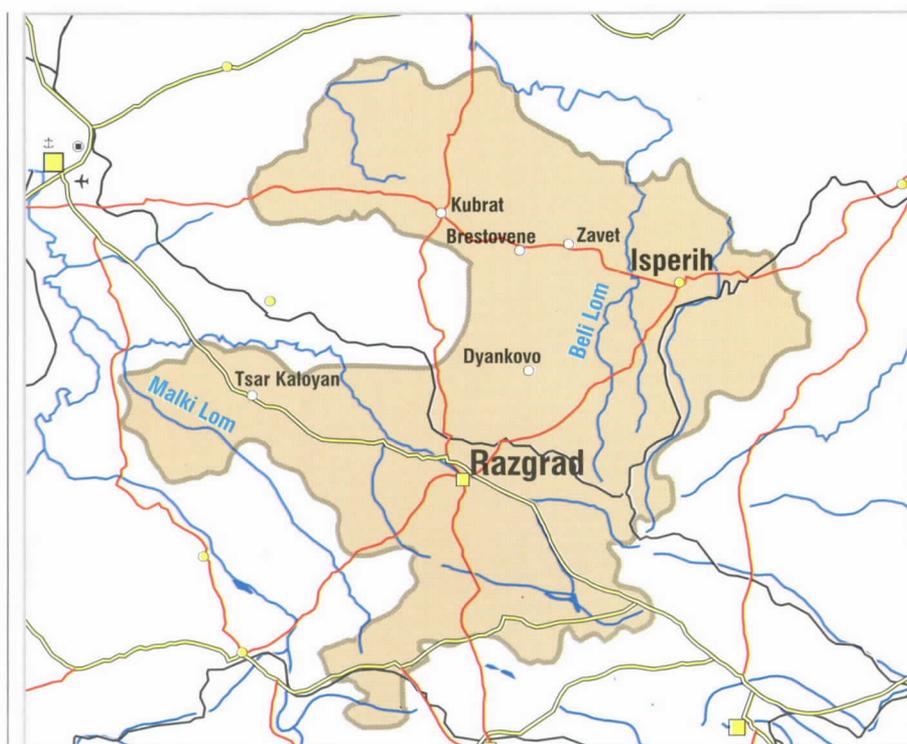


Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	232,7
Births		15,2
Deaths		21,1
Migration		-0,5
Population	31.12.98	226,3

Unemployment (1 000)





flat glass, china and faience products is another characteristic feature of local industry in Razgrad region.

Arable land accounts for 59% of the total area, and cereals, oil-bearing crops (such as sunflowers), tobacco, sugar beet and fodder crops are grown here. Vegetables are grown mainly in the valley of the Beli Lom River, while vineyards and orchards predominate in the areas situated higher above sea level. In addition to the large poultry farms in the city of Zavet and the village of Kichenitsa, apiculture is another production line developed locally.

An overall road network of 972 km gives an above-average density of 0.37 km per km². The region is traversed by the oldest railroad in Bulgaria, running from Ruse to Varna.

There is one college and 105 schools of varying academic levels. Medical services are provided by three hospitals and 109 polyclinics. There are 6 hospital beds per 1 000 inhabitants, below the Bulgarian average. With only one medical doctor catering for 515 inhabitants, Razgrad region is poorly served for medical care compared to the national average of 396.

Which regions are similar to Razgrad region?

Population density:

63 inhabitants per km²
 Dodekanisos (EL)
 Dolenjska (SI)
 Savoie (F)

Age structure:

33 % under 25
 Berkshire, Bucks and Oxfordshire (UK)
 Comunidad Valenciana (E)
 Utena (LT)

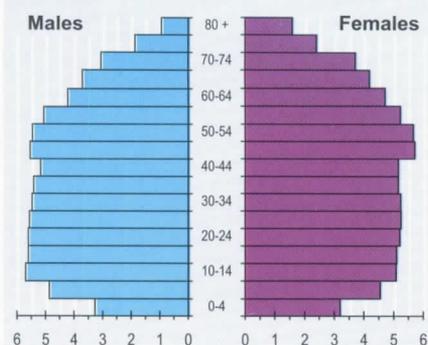
Employment structure:

26 % industry
 Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire (UK)
 Bretagne (F)
 Kurzeme (LV)

Pharmaceutical industry, glass and faience

In terms of its ethnic composition, the region is inhabited by Bulgarians and Turks in almost equal proportions (47%), with the rest of the population comprising mainly gypsies. Infant mortality, at 17 per 1 000 live births, is above the Bulgarian average. The region is slightly less urbanised than others, as only 43.7% of the population live in towns. Per capita GDP here equals the national average although, more positively, the per capita amount of foreign investment puts it in 7th place among the 28 regions. One of the biggest pharmaceutical companies in Europe is situated in the city of Razgrad (manufacturing antibiotics and other medicines). The manufacture of

Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population 31.12.92	167,3
Births	12,3
Deaths	16,6
Migration	2,8
Population 31.12.98	165,8

Unemployment (1 000)





Silistra

Window on the Danube

Situated in Northeastern Bulgaria, the region of Silistra covers an area of 2 851 km², equivalent to 2.6 % of the national territory. It borders the regions of Dobrich, Shumen, Razgrad, and Ruse, as well as having part of part of the national frontier with Romania (some of which is along the river Danube). The region has a population of 154 000 inhabitants (1998), representing 1.9% of the national total and ranking Silistra as one of Bulgaria's smaller regions. The mean population density is 54 inhabitants per km², which is below the national average of 74. The region comprises 7 municipalities, within which there are 118 settlements, including 5 cities.

The region extends over part of the eastern end of the Danube Plain and the northern sections of the Ludogorie area. With the region broadly open to the river Danube this encourages the development of navigation and fishing. Water from the river Danube is also used for irrigation.

Of historical note is the regional centre, the city of Svishtov, which developed on the remains of the Roman fortress of Durostorum. During the Middle Ages, the city was known under the name of Druster. In the Ottoman period, it was an important military fortress and was besieged on a number of occasions by Russian troops. From 1913 till 1940, this area was within the boundaries of Romania.

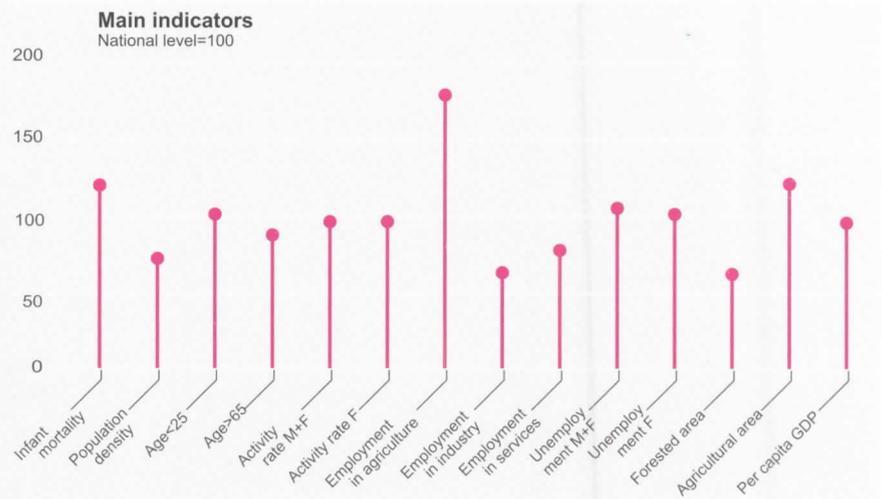
The climate is moderately continental with cold winters and hot dry summers. The river Danube is the principal river running through this territory, the other rivers are short and of no economic significance. Humus soils, suitable for growing cereal crops and vegetables, predominate.

Srebarna Lake is a national reserve, which is included in the UNESCO list of World National and Historical Heritage Sites. It is an important point on the so-called Via Pontitsa, along which every year birds of passage migrate to the Mediterranean and Africa.



The unique flora and fauna of Lake Srebarna have made it a UNESCO heritage site.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Advantageous location under-exploited

Silistra region features an advantageous transport and geographic location as well as opportunities for the promotion of cross-border co-operation, thanks to its wide access onto the river Danube. While the region enjoys good conditions for the development of agriculture, a skilled labour force, and the capacity to attract foreign investment, these aspects are however not sufficiently utilised.

Conditions here are extremely suitable for the development of the fruitgrowing industry and particularly for apricot growing. In addition, Silistra possess some of the largest woodworking capacity in Bulgaria.

On the less positive side, unemployment is growing as a consequence of the

restructuring of industry. The opportunities, which the ferry connection from Bulgaria to Romania and other countries offers, are not adequately used. There are also some environmental problems in connection with cross-border air pollution from Romanian enterprises. The scarce deposits of underground water are another severe problem for the region and make it necessary to drill deep wells to provide an adequate water supply.

A problem specific to Silistra region arises from the fact that the state frontier with the Republic of Romania passes close to the city boundary of Silistra and therefore hinders its expansion to the east.



Which regions are similar to Silistra region?

Population:

154 000 inhabitants
 Oldenburg, Kreisfreie Stadt (D)
 Kozani (EL)
 Cantal (F)

Land use:

19 % forest
 Marijampole (LT)
 Haute-Normandie (F)
 Basilicata (I)

Population density:

54 inhabitants per km²
 Leziria do Tejo (P)
 Chios (EL)
 Somogy (HU)

Industry, apricots and cereal crops

The economy here is an industrial-agrarian one. Machine tool engineering and metal processing (electronic calculators, metal-cutting machine tools, agricultural machines, gas-fired devices) are leading industries, followed by food and beverages production (vegetable oil, canning industry, flour, meat and dairy products). The woodworking and textile industries are other major branches of the regional economy.

Arable land accounts for 57% of the region's area, 7% of which requires irrigation. The major crops are cereals, forage crops, industrial crops (sunflower, hemp, broad-leaf tobacco) vegetables, fruit and vines. The region is Bulgaria's

largest producer of apricots. All types of stock are bred, and fishing is also well developed.

The inhabitants of the region account for 1.8% of those employed nationally and the unemployment rate at 17% is above the national average.

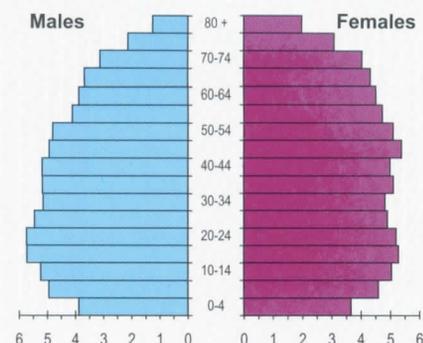
With 932 km of roads, the road density at 0.33 km per km² is below the national average. The major roads are those from Silistra to Ruse, Dobrich, Shumen and Razgrad. In addition to a border crossing point with Romania, the city of Silistra has a civilian airport as well.

Although all settlements have electricity, there are problems with the water supply. In addition to its primary schools, general and vocational high schools, there is a teachers' training college here. In Silistra, there is a research centre devoted to apricots. There is also a theatre, an art gallery and museums. The only Museum of Fishing on the Danube is situated in the city of Tutrakan.

At 7.5 per 1 000 inhabitants, the birth rate is below the national average and the death rate at 14.6 per 1 000 inhabitants is somewhat above the rate for Bulgaria as a whole. Infant mortality at 17.3 per 1 000 live births is above the national average.

Medical services are provided by one regional and several district hospitals. One medical doctor caters for 459 inhabitants, which is above the national average. There are 6.1 beds per 1 000 inhabitants, which is below the Bulgarian average.

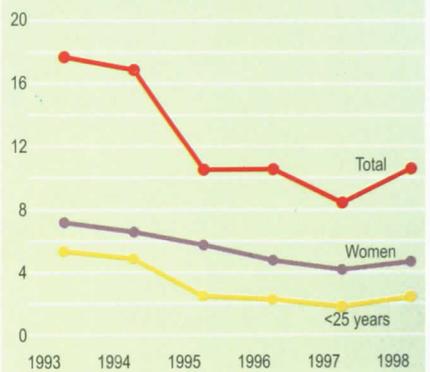
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	160,9
Births		10,3
Deaths		15,3
Migration		-2,2
Population	31.12.98	153,7

Unemployment (1 000)





Targovishte

One of Bulgaria's smallest regions

Situated in North-eastern Bulgaria, Targovishte region has as its neighbours the regions of Ruse, Razgrad, Shumen, Sliven and Veliko Tarnovo. It is one of Bulgaria's smallest regions in terms of area, its 2 560 km² representing only 2.3% of the national territory. Moreover, it is also one of the country's smallest regions in terms of population size, with 145 000 inhabitants or only 1.8% of the national total. The region's population density at 57 inhabitants per km² is considerably below the national average of 74 inhabitants per km².

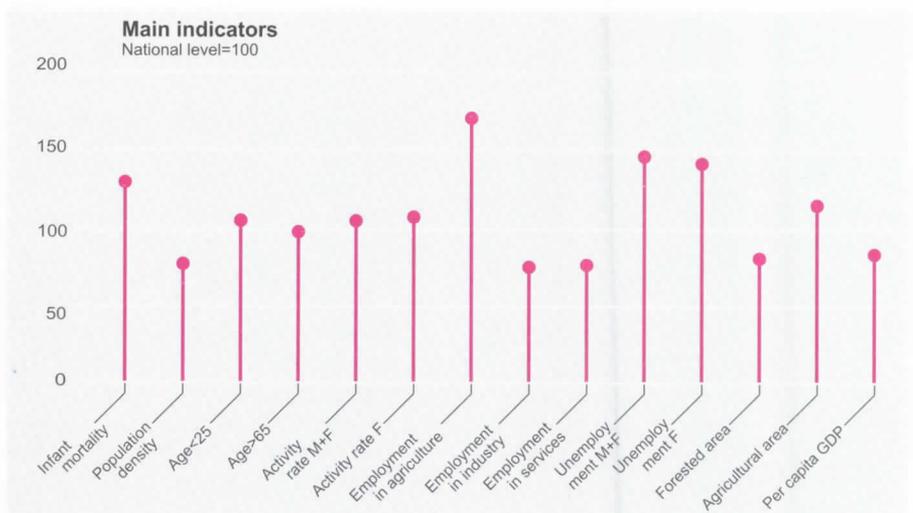
Within its 5 municipalities, there are 5 cities and 183 villages. The regional centre, the city of Targovishte, is the largest city, followed by the municipal centres of Popovo, Omurtag, Antonovo and Opaka. The regional centre emerged only in the 16th century but by the end of the 18th century it was already an important economic centre. Until 1934, Targovishte City was known under the name of Eski Dzhumaya.

The region extends over the hilly parts of the Danube Plain, which gives it its undulating relief. The climate is moderately continental. While water resources are scarce, several mineral springs have been found to the southwest of the city of Targovishte. The supply of minerals is also limited, with only deposits of building materials having thus far been detected. The forests are mainly deciduous and the soil types are not very fertile, although they are suitable for tobacco growing.



Legally delimited wine-growing regions here produce many of Bulgaria's finest vintages.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Potential for agricultural development

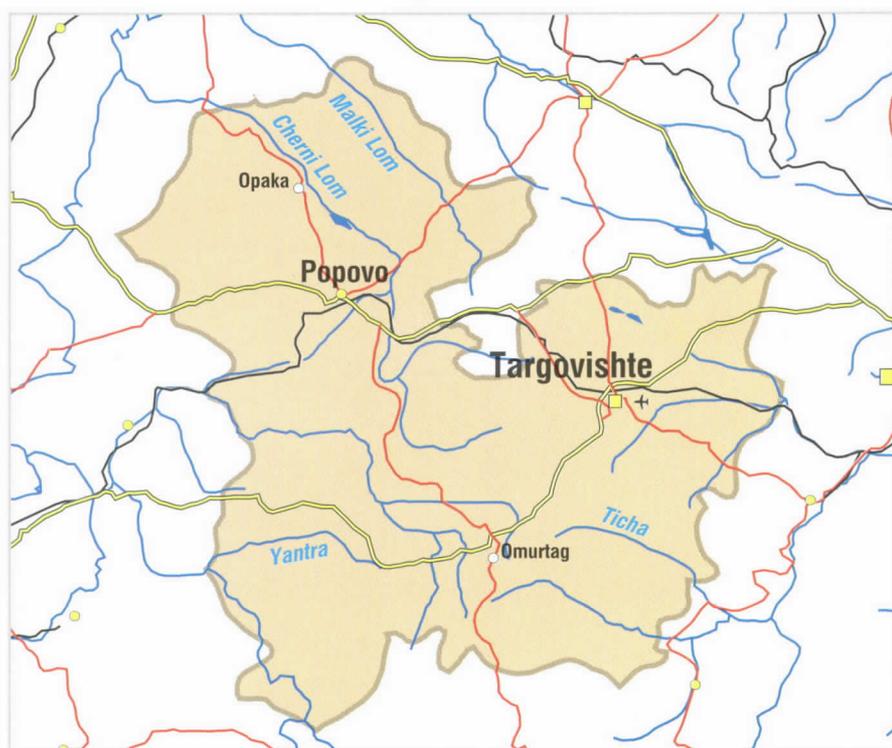
The main components for further industrial development are in place here, although they are in need of modernisation. Furthermore, the share of the active population is slightly above the national average. There is also potential for the development of multi-sectoral agriculture, although to date this has not been fully harnessed. Specific efforts will be required to stimulate agricultural production, including special incentives for private owners.

There is a steady decline in the region's population. The migration of ethnic Turks is causing depopulation of vast areas and is contributing to the disturbing demographic situation.

The most acute problem which the region faces, however, is its high unem-

ployment rate (one of the highest nationally), therefore the creation of new jobs is of primary importance here. The water shortage causes irrigation problems.

While road density at 0.46 km per km² is higher than the national average of 0.34 km per km², the roads themselves are not in a very good state of repair, particularly in rural areas. The Sofia-Varna railway crosses the region, as does a main road running in the same direction. Part of the national-gas network also runs through here.



Which regions are similar to Targovishte region?

Land use:

24 % forest

Valle d'Aosta (I)
Murcia (E)
Klaipėda (LT)

Employment structure:

23 % industry

Mellersta Norrland (S)
Extremadura (E)
Vidzeme (LV)

Age structure:

16 % over 65

Basse-Normandie (F)
Trentino-Alto Adige (I)
Latgale (LV)

Problematic demographic situation

Both a negative rate of natural increase and the migration of ethnic Turks from the region have contributed to the downward trend in the size of Targovishte region's population. Infant mortality at 18.6 per 1 000 live births is moreover higher than the national average of 14.4. The degree of urbanisation is also lower, with half of the region's inhabitants living in cities, whereas nationally the share of the urban population is just over two-thirds.

Compared to other regions, the share of the active population is relatively high (52.9% as against 50.4% in Bulgaria as a whole). However, the number of those employed per 1 000 inhabitants (214

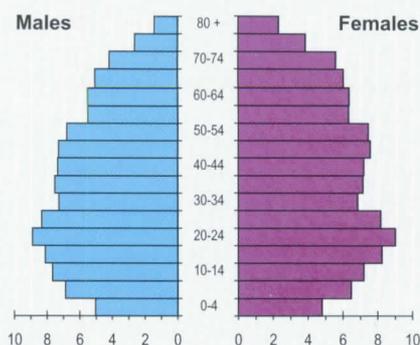
people) is below the national average (249 people). This results in Targovishte region having one of the highest unemployment levels at 23.4%. Consequently, per capita GDP is lower than that generated in most other regions.

Industry is concentrated in the regional and municipal centres, where machine tools engineering and ceramics, together with the wood-working and food and beverages industries, are found.

The share of arable land in the region's overall area is higher than the national average and a variety of crops are grown here. Particularly important among these are industrial crops (sunflower, tobacco), cereals (wheat, maize, barley), and vines. Agriculture contributes 34.0% to the regional value added, a figure which is substantially higher than the national average of 21.1%.

The regional hospital in the city of Targovishte and the municipal hospitals in the cities of Popovo and Omurtag provide 7 beds per 1 000 inhabitants, a figure which is close to the national average. There are general and vocation schools in the regional centre and the municipal centres, as well as in the larger villages. Telephone penetration is below the national average, with 353 telephones per 1 000 inhabitants compared to 387 nationally.

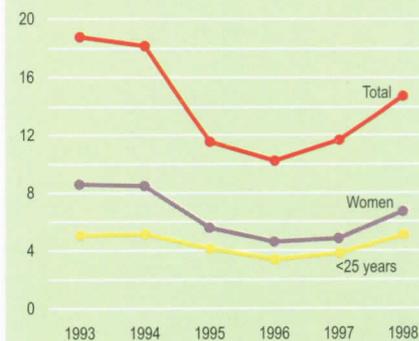
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	151,3
Births		10,9
Deaths		15,0
Migration		-1,9
Population	31.12.98	145,3

Unemployment (1 000)





Shumen

Cradle of the Bulgarian State

Shumen region extends over parts of the Eastern Danube Plain as well as over the Lower-Balkan and Balkan mountain ranges, making its relief predominantly hilly to mountainous. Its area of 3 381 km² represents 3% of Bulgaria's total area. It is divided into 10 municipalities, the main ones being Shumen and Veliki Preslav.

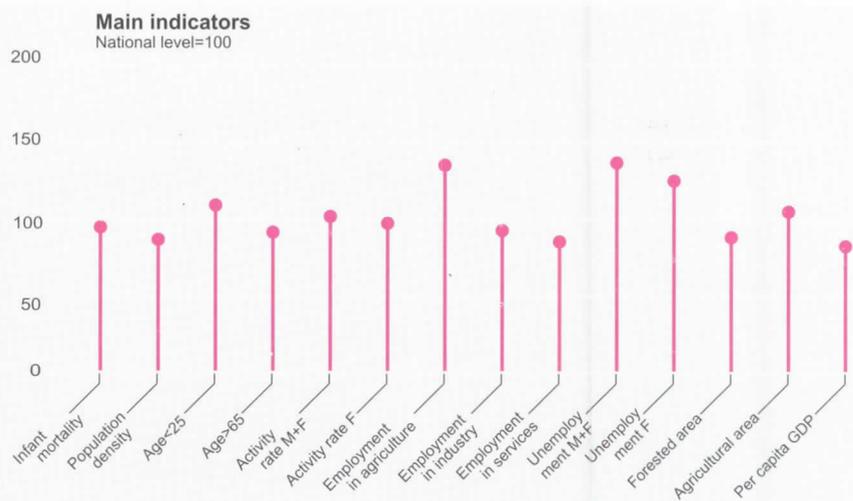
The region has a population of 216 000, equivalent to 2.6% of the national total. With a density of 64 inhabitants per km², this is slightly below the national average of 74. The ethnic composition of the population comprises mainly Bulgarians and Turks in almost equal proportions, while in addition there are some Romanians also living here.

Some 1 300 years ago, in 681, the first Bulgarian state was founded in this location. The first two capitals of the state, Pliska and Veliki Preslav, were situated here. Significant archaeological remains of both cities are an important feature of Bulgaria's cultural heritage.

The climate is moderately continental. The Golyama Kamchia River is the most significant river in the region. It is on its upper reaches that the Ticha Dam has been constructed, which is of great importance for the region's water supply. There are a number of mineral springs near the city of Varbitsa, and around the village of Marash.



The ruins of the capital of the First Bulgarian State, Pliska, testify to Bulgaria's centuries-long history. Photo by Peter Dimov



A wealth of raw materials

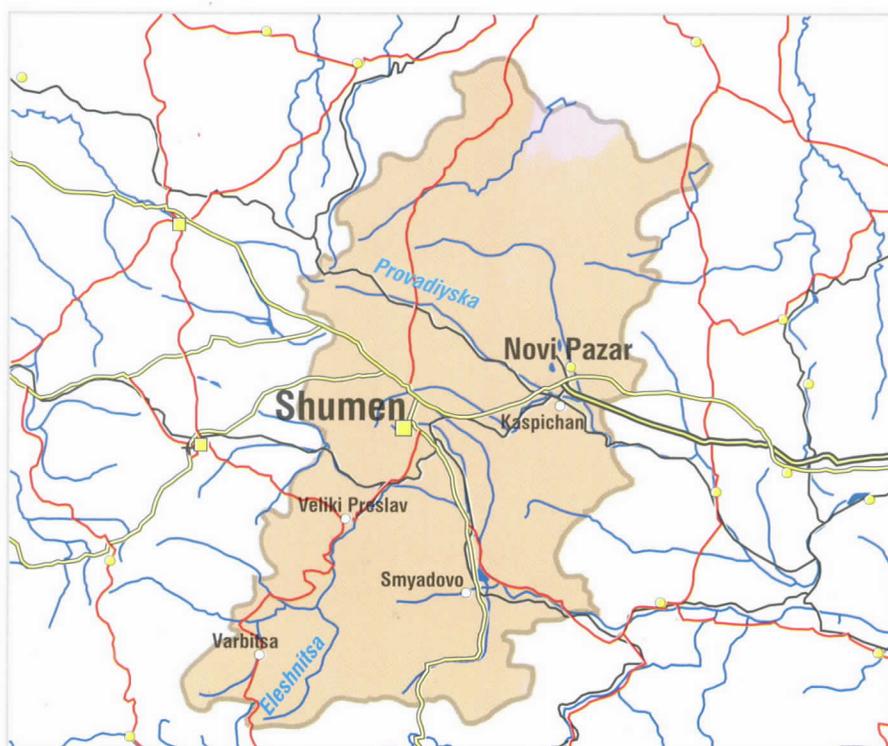
The region possesses a rich wealth of kaolin and quartz sand, which form the basis of some major production lines in the regional economy. Bulgaria's few manufacturers of aluminium products and freight trucks are located in Shumen. There is also a solid manufacturing and technological base.

Furthermore, wine and brandy are produced in Veliki Preslav, both of which are famous far beyond the boundaries of Bulgaria.

There are a number of protected areas and sites here, including the national archaeological ruins of the first Bulgarian capitals, Pliska and Veliki Preslav, as well as the ancient Bulgarian rock bas-relief, known as the Madara Horseman. These sites, which are under

the protection of UNESCO, represent rich potential for cultural tourism.

Unemployment is the major problem, which the region faces, while in the municipality of Kaolinovo, where open-cast mining of kaolin used to be undertaken, the damage to vast agricultural areas is the heaviest burden. Water shortages in some municipalities ranks also among the unresolved problems of the region. The road network is in poor condition, particularly in some mountainous areas, which hinders regular transport connections between settlements in winter.



inhabitant is substantially below average.

Industry plays a leading role in the regional economy. It accounts for 17.5% of the regional value added, compared to 24.9% nationally. One of the most important enterprises is Alumina Ad-Shumen, which manufactures aluminium products. Porcelain is manufactured in Novi Pazar and Kaspichan, and there are brewery and tobacco companies in Shumen. Agricultural land covers 59% of the region's area and cereal crops, vines and vegetables are all grown here.

The Sofia-Varna and Ruse-Varna railways cross the region, as do the Sofia-Varna, Ruse-Varna and Ruse-Karnobat-Burgas highways. With 1 138 km of roads, this gives a similar road density figure to the national one.

The University of Shumen is situated in Shumen City and there are another 156 educational establishments throughout the region.

Medical services are provided by seven hospitals and 116 polyclinics. With 10.1 hospital beds per 1 000 inhabitants, Shumen region enjoys hospital facilities considerably better than the national average. On average, each doctor provides services to slightly fewer people (389 inhabitants) than the national figure of 396.

Which regions are similar to Shumen region?

Population density:

- 64 inhabitants per km²
- Saone-et-Loire (F)
- Sonderjyllands amt (DK)
- Bacs-Kiskun (HU)

Age structure:

- 33 % under 25
- Kirde-Eesti (EE)
- Brabant Wallon (B)
- Baleares (E)

Employment structure:

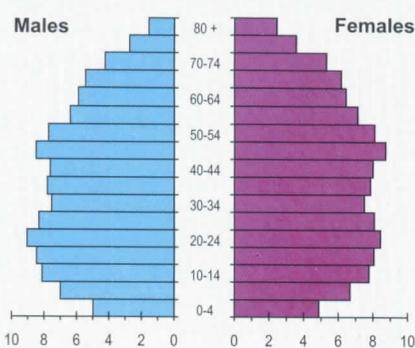
- 28 % industry
- Norra Mellansverige (S)
- West Wales and The Valleys (UK)
- Klaipėda (LT)

Mixed economy dominated by processing industry

While natural population growth is negative in Shumen region, the rate of decrease is slightly lower than the national average. A higher than average birth rate and lower than average infant mortality rate can partly account for this. However, this is counterbalanced by the fact that the death rate is slightly above the national average.

The number of those employed in the region is 2.4% of the national total, and the employment rate per 1 000 inhabitants (243 people) almost equals the Bulgarian average. The unemployment rate at 21.7% is above the national average of 16%. Per capita GDP is below average and foreign investment per

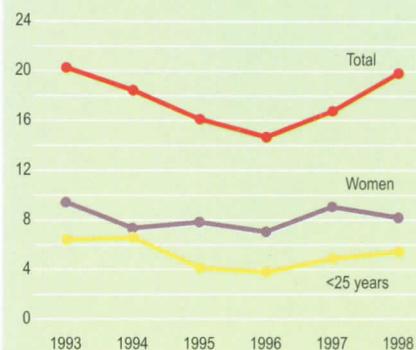
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population 31.12.92	220,2
Births	15,4
Deaths	21,0
Migration	1,5
Population 31.12.98	216,0

Unemployment (1 000)





South-East region

Close to Black Sea countries

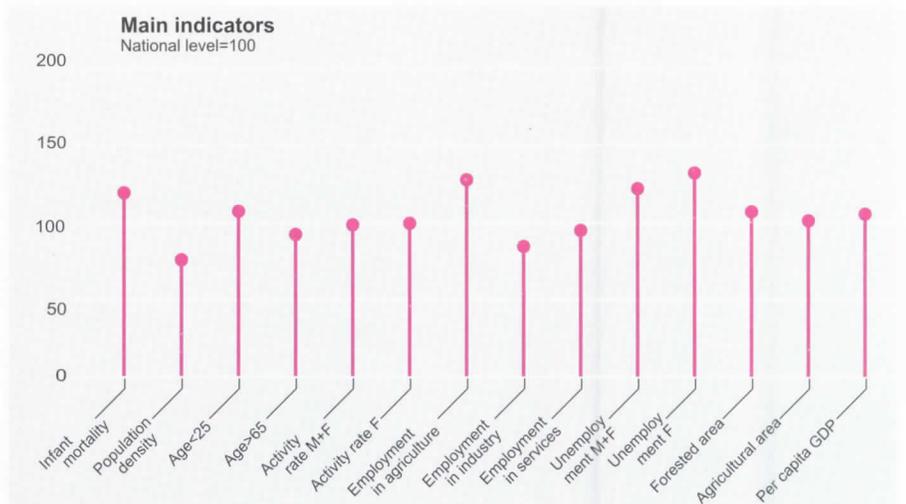
As in the other regions, in ancient times Thracian tribes inhabited this area. The Thracian town of Kabile (today Yambol) was an important stronghold under the rule of Philip of Macedonia. The Hellenic colonisers established many settlements along the Black Sea coast, the main ones being Apolonia (Sozopol) and Mesemvria (Nesebar). Under the Romans, settlements were founded at Debeltrus, Burgas, Dianopolis and Yambol. After the foundation of the Bulgarian state this territory played an important role in the country's development.

Administratively the region is broken down in 3 sub-regions - Burgas, Yambol and Sliven. They have 22 municipalities and 486 settlements between them. The major centres are Burgas with 195 000 citizens, followed by Sliven and Yambol. The region spans the country's south-eastern parts. Its northern border passes along the Balkan mountain ridge and reaches the Black Sea to the east. Connections to the North-East and North-Central regions run through the low passes at Vratnik and Kotel. The South-Central region borders the region to the west, while its southern border coincides with the state frontier with Turkey. The Black Sea forms a natural border to the east. The region is open both eastwards and westwards, which facilitates connections with other regions and with the countries in the Black Sea region.



The oil refinery in Burgas has the largest capacity in south-eastern Europe.

Photo by Peter Dimov



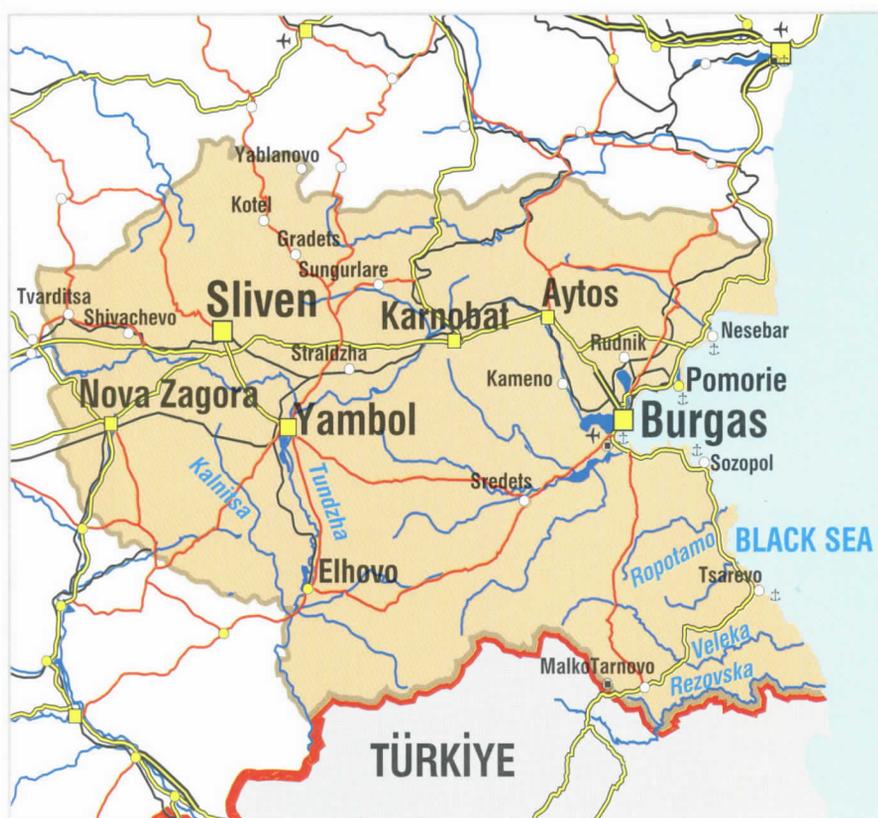
Opportunities for cross-border cooperation

The South-East region's geographic location is extremely favourable for its future economic growth. Good potential exists for cross-border co-operation, both by land and sea. The large port at Burgas and the free trade zone there should stimulate this development. Additionally, a part of the 8th European traffic corridor crosses the region. The opportunities for cooperation with Turkey are not fully exploited, despite the fact that relations between the two countries have improved in recent years. However, the opening of a new border crossing at Lesovo should further strengthen ties with Bulgaria's south-eastern neighbour. Furthermore, the region's favourable location has

increased its attractiveness in the eyes of foreign investors.

Another regional strength is the abundance of natural resources. The Black Sea water resources, the variety of soils and good climate have spurred the development of tourism and agriculture. Not surprisingly, the region is the leader in the production of wheat, vegetables and grapes. A further distinctive feature is the oil refinery in Burgas, which has the largest capacity in south-eastern Europe, and is the largest contributor to the region's economy.

The major regional drawback is the uneven allocation of both the population and the industrial capacity. The largest population density and industrial con-



Which regions are similar to South-East region?

Population density:
 69 inhabitants per km²
 Franche-Comté (F)
 North Eastern Scotland (UK)
 Del-Dunantul (HU)

Age structure:
 29 % under 25
 Abruzzo (I)
 Limburg (NL)
 Obalno-kraska (SI)

Employment structure:
 27 % agriculture
 Centro (P)
 Sterea Ellada (EL)
 Telsiai (LT)

Agriculture - 1999

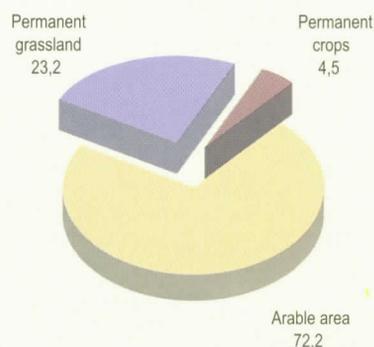
Number of private farms	165 176
Persons working in agriculture *	102 074
Total agricultural area (ha)	819 512
Total livestock	938 184
Sheep per 100 ha of total agricultural land	51,7
Pigs per 100 ha of total agricultural land	36,4
Cattle per 100 ha of total agricultural land	10,3
Main crops (1 000 tonnes)	
Wheat	451,8
Maize	55,7

* see explanatory notes

centration is in the major towns, and especially in Burgas region, while the smallest is in the Strandzha area. This misbalance forces the population to be relatively mobile.

Environmental pollution is among the region's other problems, mainly due to the emissions of the largest enterprise, "Neftohim". Other problems of lesser importance are the drop in industrial and agricultural production, the increase in the unemployment level and weaknesses in the services sector.

Agricultural land use in 1999 (%)



	Area	Population			Activity	Unemployment	Employment		
	km ²	1000	Inhabitants /km ²	Change %	%	%	Agriculture %	Industry %	Services %
	1998	1998	1998	1995-1998	1998	1998	1998	1998	1998
South-East	14 642	830	57	-2,0	49,2	19	33	26	41
Burgas	7 745	430	56	-2,1	49,7	16	26	27	47
Sliven	3 544	231	65	-1,3	51,1	26	39	26	35
Yambol	3 353	169	50	-2,8	45,5	19	43	22	35



Varied landscape

The South-East region covers 14 642 km², or 13.2% of the country's area. The largest part belongs to the Burgas oblast, which spans 52.9% of the region's territory. Second is Sliven with 24.2%, followed by the smallest region, Yambol, accounting for 22.9%.

Running from north to south, the region comprises the following natural zones, the eastern parts of the Balkan mountains, (around 1 000 m in altitude), the Balkan basin, lowlands and low mountains (Strandzha). The Burgas and Tundzha lowlands cover more than 50% of the region's total area. The Black Sea coast is deeply indented, the Burgas bay being the biggest one in Bulgaria. Most economic activity and the majority of the population are concentrated in the Burgas and Tundzha valleys.

In terms of its climate, the region is influenced by moderate, transitional-continental and Mediterranean air masses, although the Black Sea has the greatest influence. The average January temperatures reach 4°C, while the annual precipitation reaches 700 mm in the Strandzha valley. Throughout the winter northeasterly winds prevail, which cause rainstorms and blow the snow cover off of the crops. Both night and day breezes are characteristic of this region.

The region's limited water resources come mainly from the Tundzha, Luda Kamchia and Aheloy Rivers, where many artificial lakes have been built. Tourism has been developed around the lower courses of the Ropotamo, Veleka, and Rezovska Rivers, as well as on the coastal lakes.

Arable land accounts for 40% of the region's total area, and the soil is most suitable for agricultural development.

An inadequate amount of ores and minerals are extracted in this region. The most important for the mining sector are the black coal deposits at Tvarditsa, brown coal at Bugras and lignite at Elhovo. Other important deposits for the mining sector are the zinc and copper deposits at Rosen and Malko Tarnovo respectively.

Intense migratory flows

At the end of 1998, the population numbered 830 000, accounting for 10% of the country's total population. The average density here is 57 people per km² and is the second lowest in the country. In contrast to the Yambol, Burgas and

Main enterprises

Name	Activity
Ad Neftohim	Manufacture of refined petroleum products
Ead Pristanishte Burgas	Cargo handling
Ad Yambolen	Manufacture of man-made fibres
Ad Sliteks	Textile weaving
Ad Slanchev Bryag	Hotel chain
Ad Dekoteks	Manufacture of carpets and rugs
Ad Kvaris	Glass manufacturer
Burgasbus	Passenger transport company
Ad Dinamo-SI.	Manufacture of electrical equipment
Promet	Manufacture of iron products

Sliven municipalities, which have over 200 people per km², the density in the Strandzha area drops as low as 20 people per km². Two-thirds of the population live in the towns, and just over half reside in the Burgas oblast. Overall, the population is concentrated in the major towns, while only a small share of the population lives in the rest of the region. The population decreased by 2% in the period from 1995 to 1998. A major factor behind this is emigration to Bulgaria's south-eastern neighbour, Turkey. Overall, a drop in living standards and a high unemployment level contribute substantially to the high volume of migratory flows to other regions. Partly as a result of this trend, the natural increment has been negative in the last years. However, it is the highest nationally, mainly due to the relatively better age and sex structure of the population. Some 33% of the population is below the age of 25, while those aged 65 and over account for 15%, their ratio being the most favourable nationally. The share of those aged up to 25 years is largest in the Sliven oblast and smallest in the Yambol oblast. The demographic situation is of particular concern in the Bolyarovo, Malko Tarnovo and Strandzha municipalities, where the average age is very high.

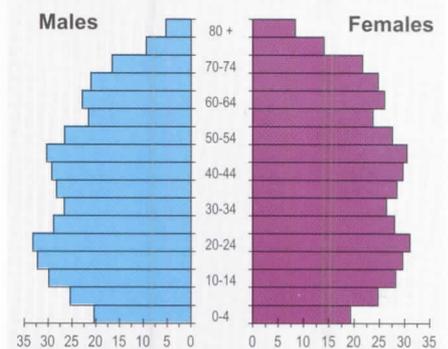
The life expectancy figure at 69.8 years is the lowest nationally, and is the only one below 70. The values of this indicator reach as low as 68.6 in the region of Sliven.

The ageing of the population causes the decrease in the birth rate and the increase in the death rate. Nevertheless, the birth rate has constantly being one of the highest nationally for the last 6 years, reaching 8.9 per 1 000 inhabitants in 1998. The death rate at 13.6 per 1 000 inhabitants is slightly lower than the average of 14.4. With its infant mortality rate at 17.4 per 1 000 live births, the region is second highest after the

North-West region. However, the infant mortality trend suffered substantial fluctuations from 1992 to 1998, reaching as high as 27.4 per 1 000 live births in 1997, which is the highest figure nationally for this period.

The population is heterogeneous in terms of ethnic structure and culture. Bulgarians account for 84.3%, while gypsies and Turks account for 4.8% and 9.7% of the total respectively. However, within these minorities schooling tends to be only at primary or secondary level, which has resulted in an overall drop in the education level.

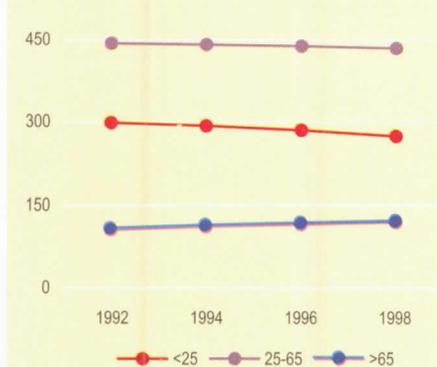
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



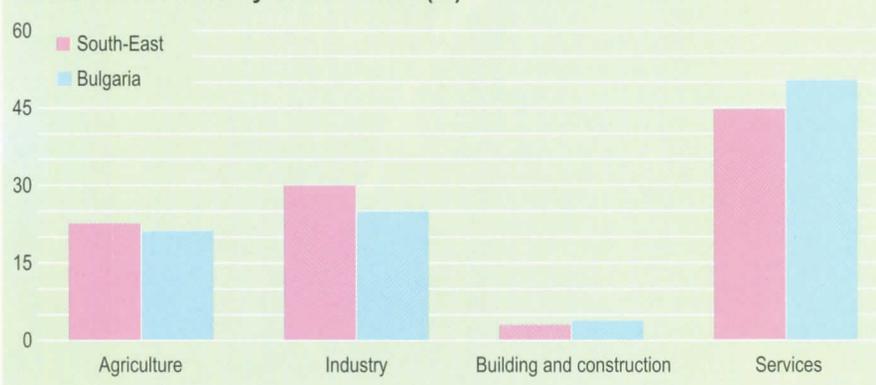
Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	851,7
31.12.92	
Births	59,4
Deaths	76,9
Migration	-4,5
Population	829,6
31.12.98	

Population by age-groups (1 000)



Gross value-added by sector - 1998 (%)



Mixed economy

The regional economy is well developed, contributing 10.6% to the national GDP, which puts it in second last place among the six regions in terms of overall contribution to the economy. However, the regional per capita GDP is outpaced only by the South-West region's per capita GDP. The major share of GDP belongs to the industry sector, with oil processing being the major contributor.

Gross value added is highest in the market and non-market branch, but is still the lowest among the other regions. The value added from industry at 29.9% in the regional total is higher than the national average of 24.9%, and is only higher in the more developed South-West region.

Favourable natural conditions benefit agricultural development. Arable land accounts for 40.2% of the region's territory, and 14% of the country's total. Grain fields (in particular wheat, oats and maize) cover the vast majority of the arable land, while the area devoted to permanent crops is decreasing.

Although 18.4% of the arable land was irrigated at the end of the 1980s, this proportion has decreased to around 2%. In terms of wheat production, only the North-West region produces more. The region is also a main producer of vegetables and grapes, and overall has the highest number of sheep.

The main industrial sectors are oil refining, the food industry, and metallurgy. The leading role of the chemical industry is due to the large capacity of "Neftohim", Burgas. The chemical industry supplied around three-quarters of the total industrial production in the country. Second in importance is the food processing industry, supplying 11% of the total production nationally. Specific regional products are tinned food in Burgas and Yambol and wine in Pomorie and Burgas. The machine building industry includes shipbuilding and the manufacture of agricultural machinery.

Retail trade is well developed due to the dominant role of industry and tourism. Around one-tenth of the total retail trade

turnover occurs in this region.

The abundance of natural resources has spurred tourist development. Half of the beaches along the Black Sea shore are situated in this region. The most popular resorts are Sozopol, Slanchev Bryag, Elenite and Dyuni. In contrast to the intense development of tourism here, tourism in the Balkan Mountains and Strandzha is quite underdeveloped.

Above average earnings

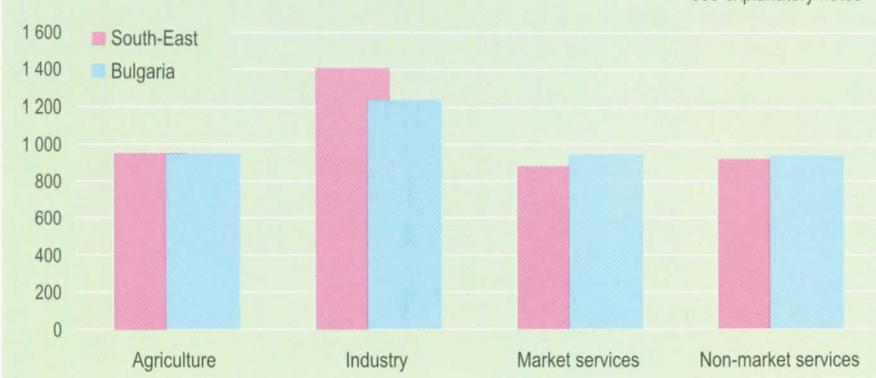
Despite high inflation rates affecting real earnings, the traditionally high wages in the core oil processing industry in the region have compensated for the overall drop, propping up the average wage at a relatively high level.

The average annual wage at the end of 1998 was second highest of all the six regions, being around 4% higher than the national average. The highest wages were recorded in industry, mainly due to the high salaries in the major oil processing plant, "Neftohim." Earnings in the agriculture sector were second highest in the region, revealing its strong position. Not surprisingly, wages earned in the market services sector are the second highest nationally, after the South-West region, due to the strong position of the tourist sector here.

More than a half of household income comes from wages and salaries. However, the share of pension payments is the highest of the regions, owing to the high pensions paid to those who worked in oil processing and in the maritime sector. A large share of income comes from renting real estate property to tourists. The latter factor also explains the large number of people whose income comes from the services sector. As a result, many citizens do not enter the labour market, which determines the negligible share of social security payments in household income, as compared to the other regions.

Wages by sector - 1998 (ECU) *

* see explanatory notes





Varied employment structure

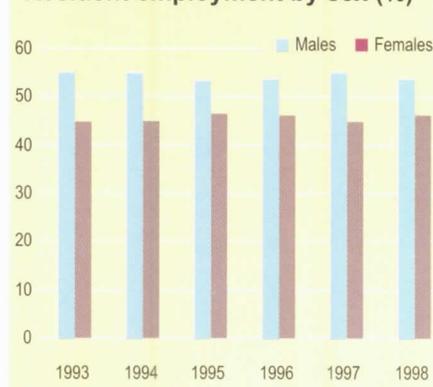
The region employs 9.3% of the total number of people employed in the country, which is the second smallest share after the North-West region. The activity rate at 49.2% is slightly lower than the national average of 50.4%. The regional employment structure reveals contrasting development within the region. While in the interior agriculture is the main employer, in the major towns along the Black Sea services dominate the economy. The high share of employment in services at 41% could be attributed mainly to the strong tourist sector, a figure which reaches as high as 47% in the region of Burgas, which is the main tourist centre in the region. In contrast, the employment rate in industry, 26%, is one of the lowest nationally, along with the bordering North-East region. The employment in agriculture at 33% reveals the agricultural specialisation in the region's western parts, its share reaching as high as 43% in the region of Yambol.

Around one fifth of the labour force is unemployed in this region (19.4%), the national average being 16.0%. Overall, the unemployment rate steadily

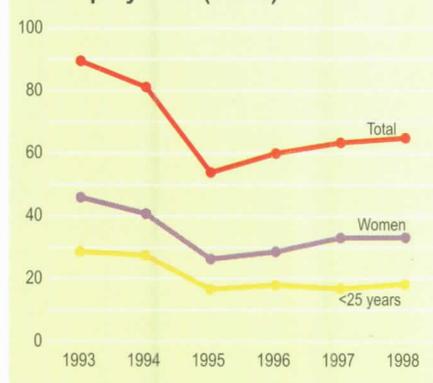
increased in the period between 1995 and 1998, being constantly one of the highest nationally. Two main factors contribute to the sustained rise in the unemployment level. First, the unemployment rate in the rural areas is substantially higher than the national average, reaching one of the highest figures nationally in the region of Sliven (26%). Second, the employment rate in industry has decreased by 11% in the period 1996-1998, which could be attributed to the overall drop in industrial production. There are several programmes in the region, aimed at retraining the unemployed and decreasing the unemployment rate. The most significant of them is the "Beautiful Bulgaria" project.

A peculiarity of the unemployment structure is the high discrepancy between the percentage of unemployed women (21%) and men (18.0%), the difference being greater here than elsewhere. A disturbing trend is the sustained rise in youth unemployment, reaching the highest value nationally in 1998 (48%). While it equalled the national average in 1995, the gap between them widened substantially from 1995 to 1998, to around 12% at the end of the period. However, the long-term unemployment rate at 53.1% is still marginally lower than the national average of 53.3%. The region also has the lowest number of vacant positions nationwide.

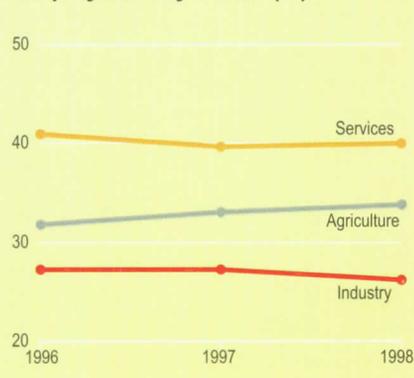
Resident employment by sex (%)



Unemployment (1 000)



Employment by sector (%)



Employment by age groups - 1998 (%)

	< 25 years	25-54 years	≥ 55 years
Men	7	84	9
Women	7	91	3
Total	7	87	6

Important sea transport

The region's geographic location has stimulated the development of its transport infrastructure. The region is the country's "sea gate." The completion of the projects related to the 8th European traffic corridor will be beneficial for further improvements to the transport network. A positive factor in this respect is the existing Black Sea zone for economic cooperation.

The leading form of transport remains road transport, since some parts of the region, namely Strandzha and Sakar, depend solely on it. There are 4 366 km of roads here, giving a road density of 298 per 1 000 km², which is one of the lowest rates in the country. The majority (93.8%) of these roads have a hard surface.

Rail transport performs only a secondary role in the transport infrastructure. The region's 386 km of railway track represent 6% of the national total. The main railway is the Burgas - Sofia line, while major rail junctions are at Yambol, Nova Zagora and Karnobat. Sea transport is vital to the region, and around 40% of the country's imports and exports pass through the port at Burgas. Air transport is also well developed, and during the active tourist season, 50% of the country's charter flights pass through Burgas airport.

Communications - 1998

	South-East	Bulgaria
Length of road in km per km ²	0,28	0,31
Length of road in km per 1000 population	4,94	4,17
Telephone connections per 1000 population	351	387

Number of pupils - 1999

	Total
Pre-school	22 391
Primary	42 756
Lower secondary	37 724
Higher secondary (vocational/general)	33 186
Tertiary (higher education)	12 482
Total	148 539

Health care - 1998

	South-East	Bulgaria
Hospitals	22	276
Doctors per 10 000 population	23,7	25,3
Hospital beds per 10 000 population	54,5	70,7

Environmental hot spots

Environmental pollution is among the severest problems that the region faces. The pollution is at its peak in the region of Burgas and around the Burgas bay. The cross-border pollution of the Black Sea is also substantial. Furthermore, problems in the environmental sphere have a negative impact on the population's fertility levels, and especially on the high rate of infant mortality.

Burgas and its vicinity are among the "environmental hot spots", and are thus regularly monitored by experts from different international organisations. The cutbacks in industrial production in some sectors have led to a substantial improvement in environmental conditions.

The problem with the shortage of drinking water for household consumption was solved to a large degree after the construction of the "Yasna Polyana" arti-

ficial lake. One fifth of the population has water restrictions imposed on it, although this figure is as high as 54.5% in the region of Sliven. Per capita water consumption at 102 litres per capita per day is equal to the national average.

All settlements have access to electricity supplies, and the majority of them are connected to sewerage outlets. 11% of post offices are based in the region, and the lowest number of telephone lines (9%) is found here.

Transport via pipelines is of national importance, as the gas supply for the whole country flows through the pipelines connected to "Neftohim" at Burgas. An oil pipeline from Burgas to Alexandropolis, Greece, will be constructed in the near future.

Tourist oriented infrastructure

Cultural landmarks in this region have been an important prerequisite for the

development of tourism, and regional specialisation in this sector has conditioned its overall cultural development in the last decades. The influence of the Mediterranean culture can be felt in the majority of the towns along the Black Sea coast.

The region has 430 schools, the number of pupils accounting for 10% of the national total. The tertiary education network is large, comprising several colleges and universities. The student body accounts for 5% of the national total.

The region's 22 health care institutions have a shortage of hospital beds, as with only 5.5 beds per 1 000 inhabitants this is the lowest figure nationally. Some 9% of all Bulgaria's doctors reside here, the patients per doctor numbering 422. There are 7 theatres, 25 cinemas, 25 museums and 780 libraries here. One of the most famous Bulgarian churches, "Sts. Cyril and Methodius", is also located in this region.



Burgas

Southern Bulgaria's Sea Gate

The region, with the city of Burgas as its regional centre, is situated in the south-east corner of Bulgaria. It is the largest of Bulgaria's 28 regions, covering an area of 7 744 km² or 6.9% of the national territory. It borders the regions of Varna, Shumen, Yambol and Sliven, the Black Sea to the east and the Republic of Turkey to the south. The region is administered by 12 municipalities, which have 14 cities and 259 settlements. The region has a population of 430 000 inhabitants (1998), accounting for 5.2% of the national total, which puts it in 4th place among the regions. Mean density at 56 inhabitants per km² is below average.

In ancient times this area was inhabited by Thracian tribes and in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. Greek colonists founded a number of settlements here, including Apolonia and Mesemvria. Later on, the Romans built the Debelum Fortress here. Numerous mediaeval churches have been preserved in the city of Nesebar and elsewhere.

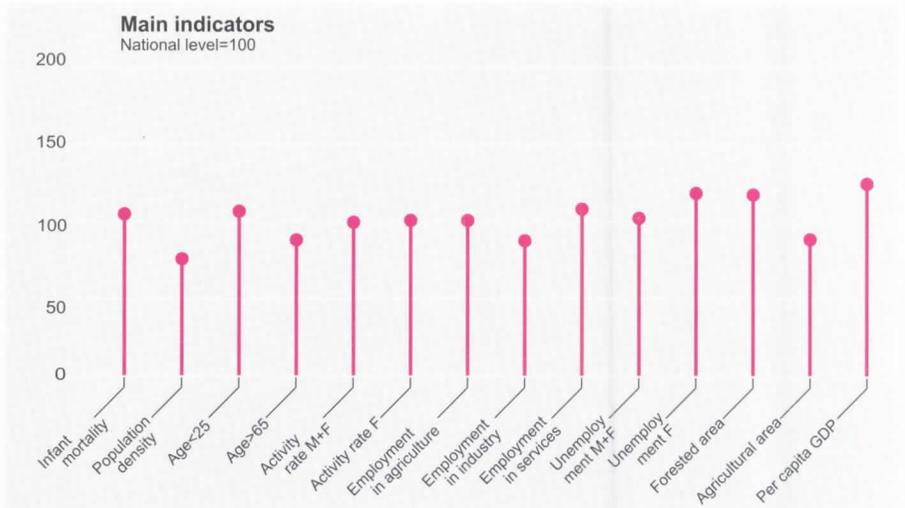
The relief features great diversity, extending over part of the Eastern Balkan mountain range, the Burgas Lowlands and the Strandzha mountain. The climate is a transitional-continental one with a strong influence from the sea. The rivers, Luda Kamchia, Hadzhiyska, Rusokastrenska, Veleka, Ropotamo, and the border river Resovska, are short and discharge into the Black Sea. There are a number of lakes as well, including the Pomoriysko, Mandrensko, Atanasovsko and Burgas lakes. The explored mineral deposits comprise brown coal, copper, poly-metallic ores, Balgarite and marble.

In the southern end of the region as well as in the Balkan mountain range one may find vast forests of well-preserved deciduous trees. The first nature reserve in Bulgaria, Silkosia, is situated on Strandzha Mountain.



Burgas is Bulgaria's busiest harbour in terms of both freight and passengers.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Advantageous location and sea resorts

This part of the country is one of the most industrialised areas and is characterised by a large and diversified manufacturing potential. Some further advantages are the favourable agro-climatic and soil conditions, the availability of a skilled labour force, the existence of a duty free zone, a commercial port offering opportunities for transit freight, and the ability to attract substantial foreign investment. Conditions for the development of tourism and recreational activities are considerable. The Slanchev Bryag (Sunny Beach), Elenite, and Dyuni resorts, along with the cities of Nesebar and Pomorie, are of national and international renown and contribute to the regional economy.

The region, and particularly the city of Burgas, is situated at the start of the

Bulgarian section of the 8th international transport corridor, giving it advantageous transport connections. The regional centre will also be the starting point of the future oil pipeline from Burgas to Alexandropolis (Greece). These aspects will further enhance the attractiveness of the region for various forms of investment. Its geographic location offers opportunities for cross-border co-operation with countries on the Black Sea, Caspian Sea and in other regions. Some of the regional disadvantages are the great concentration of its urban population and the rising unemployment level as a consequence of restructuring industry and agriculture. Another problem is environmental protection, particularly along the contact zone between land and sea. At that point the environ-



while 9% of the population in the region are ethnic Turks, mainly in the municipalities of Aytos and Ruen.

The region is inhabited by 5.0% of the total number of those gainfully employed in Bulgaria. The unemployment level at 16.3% is just above the national average, but showing a growing trend.

Petrol processing is the principal industrial sector. Neftochim-Burgas processes crude oil and part of its production output is exported. Other industrial sectors include food and beverages production, machine tool engineering (shipbuilding and ship repair) and electro-technical industry. The product line comprises ships, chemical fibre, and electro-technical components. The energy sector is represented by industrial thermal power plants and relies above all on the national grid.

Arable land accounts for 34% of the total area of the region. Compared to the rest of the country, a relatively higher share of land is used for cultivating technical and cereal crops and perennial plants, and a lower share of the area is for vegetable growing and forage crops.

Road length here is 2 142 km, giving a density of 0.28 km per km², which is below average. The major roads traversing the region are the Sofia-Plovdiv-Burgas and Sofia-Karlovo-Burgas roads and the panoramic Constantza - Varna - Burgas - Malko Tarnovo - Istanbul highway. Railroads connect the city of Burgas to Sofia and inland. There is an international commercial harbour at Burgas with a specialised crude oil port as well as an international airport. Pipelines transport natural gas to Turkey as well as to other parts of Bulgaria.

In addition to primary and secondary schools, Burgas has two higher educational establishments (a university and a chemical college).

Which regions are similar to Burgas region?

Land use:

- 35 % forest
- Niederösterreich (A)
- Reunion (FR) (F)
- Zachodno Pomorskie (PL)

Age structure:

- 14 % over 65
- Rhône-Alpes (F)
- Brabant Wallon (B)
- Laane-Eesti (EE)

Employment structure:

- 27 % industry
- Zeeland (NL)
- Lincolnshire (UK)
- Brněnský (CZ)

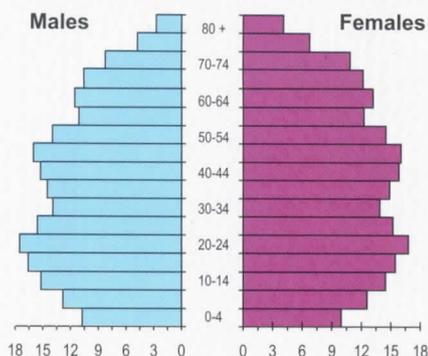
ment is subject to extreme overloading due to the high concentration of polluting manufacturing facilities (the petrochemical industry) as well as the operation of two harbours.

A process of depopulation is underway in some municipalities in the Balkan mountain range areas of the region, which also gives cause for concern.

From petrochemical industry to seaports

In terms of its demographic features, natural growth at -3.8 per 1 000 inhabitants and infant mortality at 15 per 1 000 live births are both higher than the national average. Birth and death rates are respectively 9.0 and 12.8 per 1 000 inhabitants. The urban population accounts for 69.5% of the regional total,

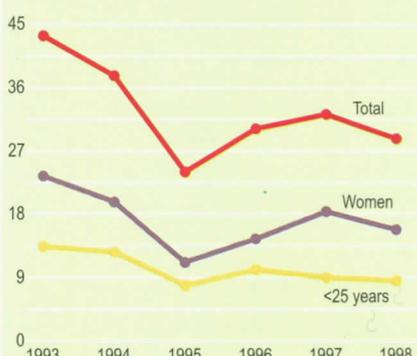
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	440,4
Births		30,3
Deaths		37,5
Migration		-3,3
Population	31.12.98	430,0

Unemployment (1 000)





Sliven

Between the Balkan mountains and the river Tundzha

The city of Sliven is the administrative centre of the region bearing the same name, which is situated in the south-eastern part of Bulgaria. This region has an area of 3 544 km² (3.2% of the national territory). It borders the regions of Veliko Tarnovo, Targovishte and Shumen to the north, Burgas region to the east, Yambol to the south and Stara Zagora to the west. The region comprises 4 municipalities, covering a total of 120 settlements, including 4 cities and 116 villages. The population of the region is 213 000 inhabitants (2.8% of the total population of Bulgaria). The population density is 65 inhabitants per km². With two-thirds of the population living in urban areas, this is almost equal to the national average.

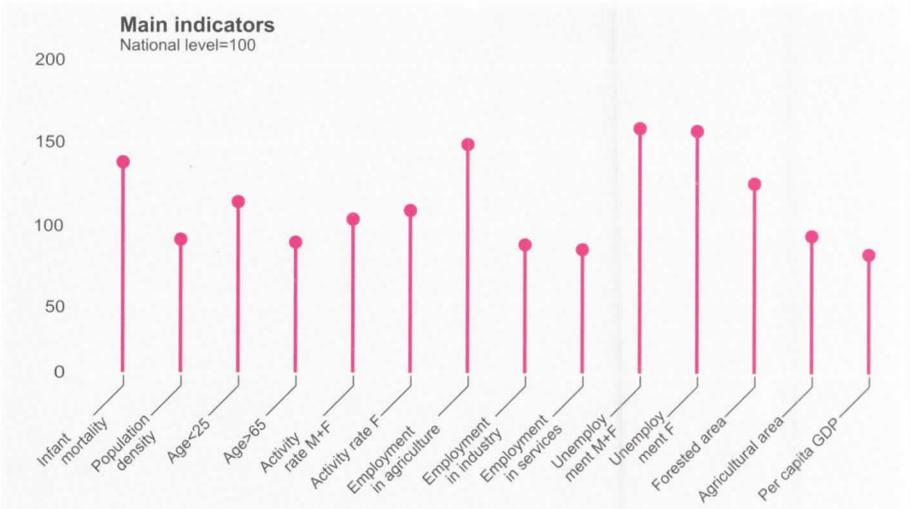
The relief is quite diverse, extending over part of the Central and Eastern Balkan mountain ranges, the Sliven and Tvardishka valleys, parts of Sarnena Sredna Gora, the Upper Thracian lowland and the valley of the river Tundzha. After being inhabited by Thracian tribes, this area was conquered by the Romans after the 1st century A.D. During the Ottoman era, Sliven and its surrounding area used to be an important military, trade and manufacturing centre. The very first textile factory using a steam engine in Bulgaria was founded in Sliven in 1834.

The climate in the northern part of the region is moderately continental with some hints of a mountainous influence. The areas in the lowlands and those with an undulating relief have a transitional-continental climate. The rivers Tundzha, Luda Kamchia, Ticha, and Stara Reka flow through the region. There are mineral springs near Sliven and Nova Zagora. Deposits of metallurgical and brown coal, as well as of raw materials for building construction, have been discovered locally.



Rich in cultural attractions, Sliven has preserved the spirit of the Bulgarian Renaissance.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Grave shortage of investment

A high concentration of textile production is one of the region's main advantages. The main employers in the region are manufacturers of woollen goods, including the production of carpets and rugs. In addition, favourable agro-climatic and soil conditions continue to benefit developments in agriculture. Nevertheless, a major regional problem is the lack of a skilled and educated labour force. Furthermore, the number of those who are unemployed has grown as a consequence of the ongoing restructuring in industry and agriculture. The unemployment rate is particularly grave among the gypsy population in the municipalities of Kotel and Sliven. The presence of numerous historical

and architectural monuments from the Renaissance in the cities of Sliven and Kotel and the villages of Zheravna, Gradets and Medven and elsewhere should help the development of cultural based tourism to the region. Another problem here is the grave shortage of foreign investment, which is a barrier to both the upgrading of the local economy and to decreasing the unemployment level. The volume of per capita foreign investment is negligible and is the lowest figure in the whole country.



Which regions are similar to Sliven region?

Population density:
65 inhabitants per km²
Calarasi (RO)
Granada (E)
Cova da Beira (P)

Population:
231 000 inhabitants
Rosenheim, Landkreis (D)
Evvoia (EL)
Covasna (RO)

Area:
3 544 km²
Kent CC (UK)
Osrednjeslovenska (SI)
Catania (I)

Worrying unemployment level

The demographic situation in Sliven contrasts with the overall picture in the country. While the death rate (13.7 per 1 000 inhabitants) is just slightly lower than the Bulgarian average, the birth rate (10 per 1 000 inhabitants) is the highest figure nationally. A problem of particular concern is that the second highest infant mortality rate in the country has been recorded here (19.8 per 1 000 live births). A peculiarity of the ethnic structure of the population is the highest share of gypsies nationally, accounting for 7.7% of the total. Overall, the age structure is progressive, the share of under 25s being 35%, while those over 65 account for 14% of the total.

Just over half the population of the region are active, while the unemployment level at 25.6% is the second highest in Bulgaria, and is even higher among the gypsy population. This is reflected in the number of those employed per 1 000 inhabitants, which is 200 people compared to 249 nationally.

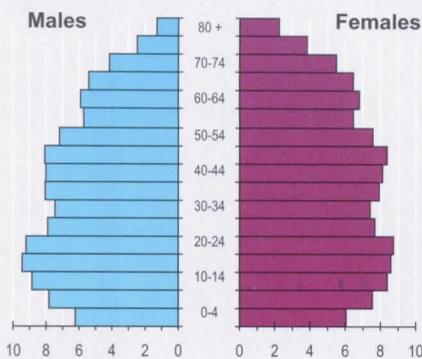
The energy sector is represented by one thermal power plant in the city of Sliven, however the region depends mainly on the national grid. The main industrial branches developed locally are the woollen and cotton textile industry, machine tool engineering and metal processing, food and beverages production, timber logging and wood-working.

Arable land accounts for 34.5% of the area. The main crops are cereals and oil-bearing crops, viticulture and fruit-growing. Sheep and cattle breeding is well developed on the basis of the availability of vast mountain pasture land.

The length of regional roads is 1 225 km, with road density at 0.35 km per km² being slightly above the national figure of 0.34 km per km². The more important routes traversing the area are the Sofia-Sliven-Burgas and Sofia-Plovdiv-Nova Zagora-Burgas roads. The Sofia-Karlovo-Burgas, Sofia-Plovdiv-Burgas and Nova Zagora-Maritsa railway lines cross the region.

With a total of 120 schools, the region is well covered in this area. Furthermore, all settlements are connected to an electric supply and to a water supply. Medical services are provided by one regional and several district hospitals, while cures can be taken at the Sliven Mineral Spa and at Korten. One medical doctor caters for 413 inhabitants, which is slightly above the national average. The beds per 1 000 inhabitants at 5.5 are substantially lower than the national average of 7.1.

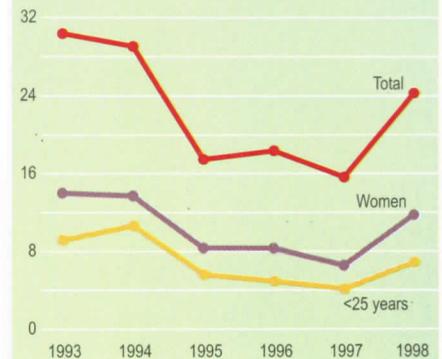
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	234,7
Births		18,7
Deaths		21,4
Migration		-1,1
Population	31.12.98	231,0

Unemployment (1 000)





Yambol

Between Upper Thrace and Mount Strandzha

Yambol region is situated in the south-eastern part of Bulgaria. It has a population of 169 000 inhabitants (1998) or 2% of the national total, making it one of Bulgaria's smaller region by population size. The mean population density at 50 inhabitants per km² is considerably below the national average. It has an area of 3 353 km² (3.0% of the total area of Bulgaria) and borders the regions of Burgas to the east, Sliven, Haskovo and Stara Zagora to the west and the state frontier with the Republic of Turkey to the south. Yambol region consists of 5 municipalities, within which there are 4 cities and 102 villages. The relative share of the urban population at 65% is below the national average.

The diverse relief of the region extends over parts of Mount Sakar to the south, while there are several hills and flat areas to the north. The climate is transitional-continental in nature. The rivers traversing the area are small, except for the river Tundzha, and are of no economic significance.

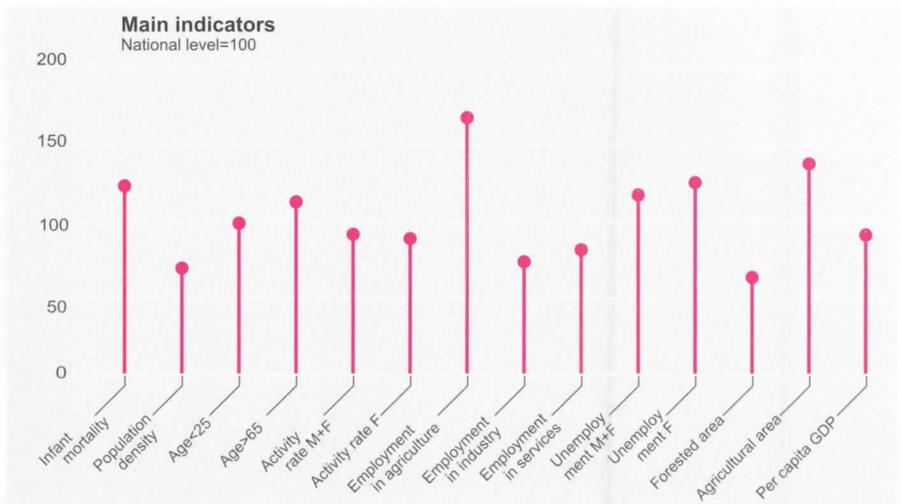
Numerous archaeological landmarks and remains of Thracian (Kabile) and Roman (Dianopolis) settlements have been discovered.

Mineral deposits in the region, such as lignite coal, lead-zinc ore and iron ore, are not exploited. There are also deposits of marble, granite and clay. Mineral springs can be found in Yambol and the village of Stefan Karadzhevo.



The region's architecture intertwines elements from various eras and religions.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Opportunities not exploited

The favourable climatic and soil conditions have spurred agricultural development. Agriculture employs almost half of the employees in the region and contributes more than one third to the regional value added. The agricultural sector has close ties with industry, which supplies it with machines and fertilizers.

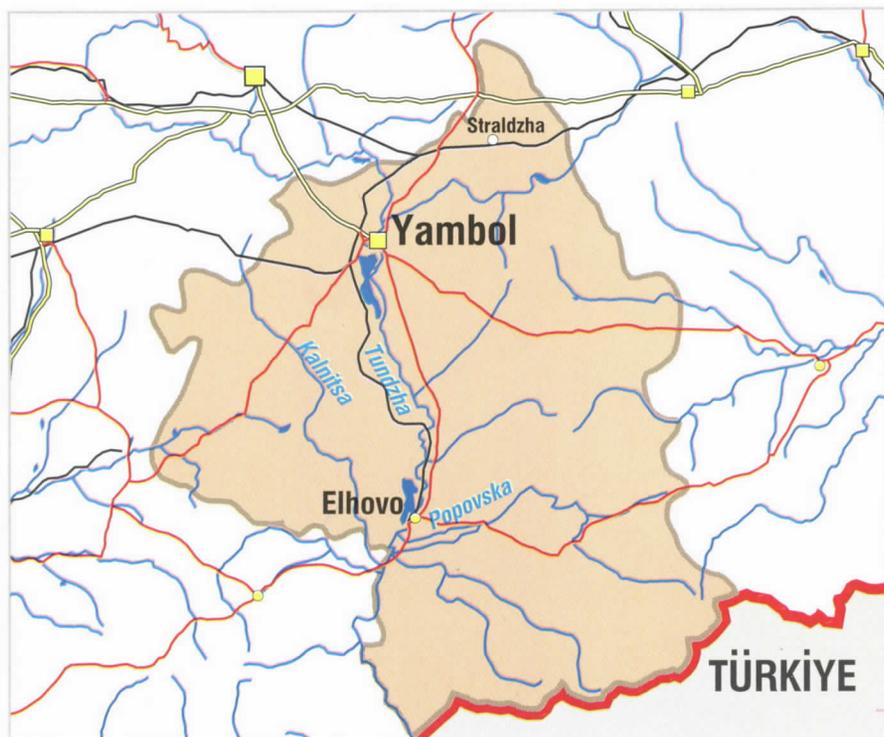
Another significant feature here is the well-developed chemical industry, the main employer in the region being a manufacturer of man-made fibres.

Other regional advantages include its advantageous transport and geographic location, as well as its archaeological monuments and natural landmarks, which should provide good opportunities for the development of tourism.

The setting up of a new border-crossing

point with the Republic of Turkey is forthcoming. It will enhance the opportunities for cross-border co-operation and should increase international transit traffic.

Unemployment is growing as a consequence of the process of restructuring industry and agriculture. The available mineral water springs are not adequately used for spa cures. Neither is full use made of the opportunities for attracting foreign capital offered by the border location. Due to migration of the population for economic reasons some depopulation has been noted in the southern areas along the border.



Which regions are similar to Yambol region?

Population density:
50 inhabitants per km²
Serres (EL)
Aude (F)
Harghita (RO)

Age structure:
18 % over 65
Galicia (E)
Bourgogne (F)
Sydsverige (S)

Employment structure:
22 % industry
Devon (UK)
Aquitaine (F)
Panevezys (LT)

Low activity rate

Natural population growth here is negative, due to a below average birth rate (7.1 per 1 000 inhabitants) and a higher than average death rate (15.4 per 1 000 inhabitants). Infant mortality at 17.4 per 1 000 live births is also above the national average of 14.4.

With only 45.5% of the population active, this is one of the lowest rates in the country and is lower still for women. The number of those employed per 1 000 inhabitants is 188 people, which is considerably below the national average. The gainfully employed account for 1.6% of the national total of those employed, while the unemployment rate at 18.6% is above the national average.

Yambol region's main industrial sectors

are the chemical industry, textile industry, machine tool engineering and food and beverages production (canned vegetables and fruit).

Arable land accounts for 62% of the region's total area, 19% of it requiring irrigation. The main agricultural products are cereals and oil-bearing plants (sunflower, tobacco), vegetables, viticulture, fruits. Stockbreeding covers all animal types.

With the region having a total road length of 1 022 km, this gives a below average density of 0.29 km per km². The most important roads traversing the region are the Sofia-Plovdiv-Nova Zagora-Yambol road which continues on to Burgas and the Sliven-Yambol-Elhovo via Mount Sakar road which runs as far as the city of Svilengrad in Haskovo region. This road will gain in importance after the opening of a new border crossing with the Republic of Turkey at Lesovo. The Sofia-Plovdiv-Yambol-Burgas railroad with a transfer connection at Zimnia to the Sofia-Karlovo-Burgas railroad runs through the northern end of the region. At Yambol there is a branch line to Elhovo. All settlements in the region are connected to power and water supplies. As well as primary schools, high schools and vocational high schools, there are two museums, two theatres and numerous houses of culture.

Medical services are provided by one regional and several district hospitals. Health-care is poorer than average, as one medical doctor caters for 426 people as against 396 nationally, and only 5.8 hospital beds are provided per 1 000 inhabitants as against 7.1 nationally.

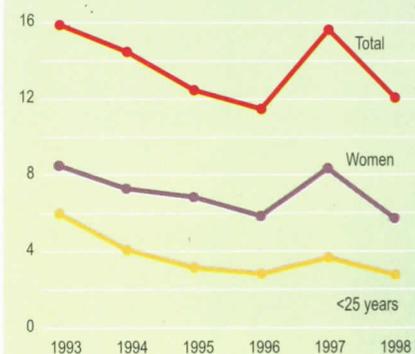
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population 31.12.92	176,6
Births	10,4
Deaths	18,1
Migration	-0,2
Population 31.12.98	168,7

Unemployment (1 000)





South-Central region

The centre of ancient Thrace

The natural beauty of this region is mentioned in the chronicles of many historians and travellers who crossed this area. They described the warm and fertile Gornotrakiyska lowland, naturally irrigated by the Maritsa River and its streams, and highlighted the region's importance as a crossroads between the ancient East, Europe, the Balkan lands and the Mediterranean. The roads through the Rhodopi, Balkan mountains and the Sredna Gora passages merge into one when they reach the famous three peaks, *tepetata*, which were used as natural strongholds in the past. The Thracians established the oldest Bulgarian city, Evmolpius, later renamed Pulpudeva, in the vicinity of the three hills. Another centre of the Thracian civilisation was Sevtopolis, the ancient capital of the Odrisi tribe.

Under Ottoman rule, many important trade and craft centres were established, such as Karlovo, Kalofer, Asenovgrad and Haskovo.

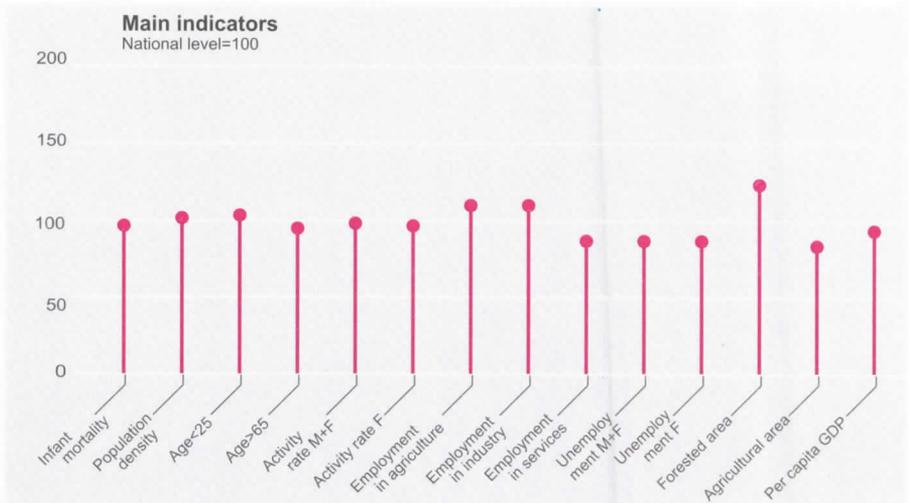
In administrative terms, the region is divided into the 6 oblasti of Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Haskovo, Pazardzhik, Smolyan, and Kardzhali, which have 66 municipalities and 1 513 settlements between them. The main regional centres are the towns of Plovdiv, with a population of 342 000, followed by Stara Zagora and Haskovo.

The Balkan mountain ridge borders the region to the north, where the roads to North Bulgaria pass through the Shipka and Hainboaz passages. The South-West region borders it to the west, the South-East to the east, while the state border with Greece is to the south. The imminent opening of the Rudozem and Makaza crossings to Greece will ease the freight and passenger traffic at the overloaded border passages at Kapitan Andreevo (Turkey), and Ormenion (Greece). The connections with the South-West region, nevertheless, have the most intense traffic.



Part of the Asia to Europe route, Kapitan Andreevo is one of the major border crossings.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Pivotal geographic location

The geographical position of the region is one of its major advantages, due to the well-developed transport infrastructure and the opportunities for economic development. Three European traffic corridors cross its territory, as well as some key domestic routes, including the Trakia and Maritsa highways. The main roads are situated along the valley of the Maritsa River, a tradition that dates back in time.

The region's second greatest asset is the abundance of natural resources. The region is strong in the energy sector, in non-ferrous metallurgy and in agriculture.

In addition, the region has a strong economic base and a favourable demo-

graphic structure. As in the South-West region, these factors have spurred the development of modern technologies and science.

A major regional drawback is, however, environmental pollution. The highest emissions of toxic fumes have been recorded in the Stara Zagora and Haskovo oblasti, while the air is cleanest in Smolyan. Industrial specialisation in the region has worsened its environmental problems, one of the main ones being the deforestation of the Rhodopi mountains, due to the uncontrolled felling of timber for export.

High unemployment and intense migratory flows to other regions and to neighbouring countries are some of the



Which regions are similar to South-Central region?

Age structure:

- 32 % under 25
- Thessalia (EL)
- Oberosterreich (A)
- Spodnjeposavska (SI)

Land use:

- 47 % agriculture
- Toscana (I)
- Franche-Comté (F)
- Utena (LT)

Employment structure:

- 34 % industry
- Trnavsky (SK)
- Haute-Normandie (F)
- Kassel (D)

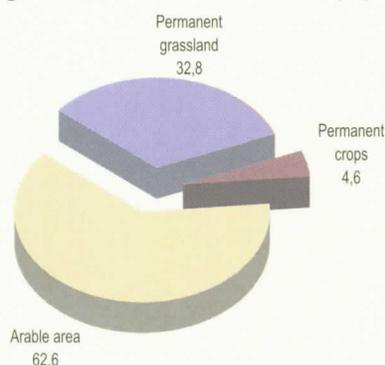
Agriculture - 1999

Number of private farms	385 501
Persons working in agriculture *	224 211
Total agricultural area (ha)	1 293 280
Total livestock	1 355 403
Sheep per 100 ha of total agricultural land	43,6
Pigs per 100 ha of total agricultural land	24,2
Cattle per 100 ha of total agricultural land	17,0
Main crops (1 000 tonnes)	
Wheat	533,5
Maize	111,2

* see explanatory notes

region's weaknesses. These migratory flows intensified in the transition period to a market economy. Emigration is high, mainly due to the variety in the ethnic structure and is favoured by the region's closeness to Turkey. Another problem is the disappearance of markets for some traditionally well-developed product lines, such as textiles, electronics, and food.

Agricultural land use in 1999 (%)



	Area		Population			Activity %	Unemployment %	Employment			
	km ²	1000	Inhabitants /km ²	Change %	1998			1998	1998	1998	1998
		1998									
South-Central	27 496	2 076	76	-1,7	49,2	14	29	34	37		
Pazardzhik	4 459	318	71	-2,2	47,9	22	33	32	35		
Plovdiv	5 966	725	121	-1,1	47,3	9	26	34	41		
Smolyan	3 195	152	48	-2,9	52,8	17	29	31	40		
Kardzhali	3 209	211	66	-1,2	55,6	11	46	21	32		
Stara Zagora	5 147	386	75	-1,7	48,6	10	23	42	35		
Haskovo	5 520	285	52	-2,3	50,1	22	29	33	38		



Bulgaria's largest planning region

With its area of 27 496 km², or 24.8% of the country's total, the region is the largest planning region in Bulgaria. The greatest share belongs to the Plovdiv oblast, 21.7%, followed by Haskovo and Stara Zagora.

The relief is varied. To the north of the region there are the southern slopes of the Balkan mountains and the Karlovo and Kazanlak span Zadbalkan basins. The Gornotrakiyska basin takes up the central part of the region. It is here that around two-thirds of the region's economic potential is concentrated. The Western and Eastern Rhodopi mountains extend over the region's southern parts.

The climate is a transitional continental one with a strong Mediterranean influence, especially along the valley of the Arda River and the Haskovo Plain. However, the climate in the southern parts, with altitudes over 1 200 m, is predominantly mountainous, and the long period of snow cover is welcome for the winter tourist season. Annual precipitation varies from 500 mm to 1 000 mm in the western Rhodopi, while frequent winds are characteristic of the East Rhodopi and the Haskovo Plain.

Over one-third of the country's total water supply comes from the Maritsa, Arda and Topolnitsa rivers here, which also form the basis of the regional economy. Many artificial lakes and hydroelectric plants have been built around these 3 main rivers. The abundance of thermal and mineral water, pumped at Velingrad, Hisarya and Gorna Banya, has encouraged the growth of several health resorts. Around two-thirds of the total water resources are used for industrial and agricultural purposes, and less than one-tenth is used for household consumption.

Along with abundant quantities of ores and other minerals, the region's coal deposits in the Maritsa-Iztok coal mines account for 72% of the country's total coal reserves.

Arable land accounts for 29.4% of the region's area, the second lowest share after the South-West region.

High interregional migration

At the end of 1998, the population numbered 2 076 095, or 25.2% of the country's total. South-Central and the neighbouring South-West region are together home to more than a half of Bulgaria's

Main enterprises

Name	Activity
Vazovski Mashinostroitelni Zavodi	Casting of steel
Ad Arsenal	Manufacture of weapons and ammunition
Ad Mini Maritsa - Iztok - Klon Rudnik Troyanovo - Sever	Lignite mining
Ad Agrobiohim	Fertilizers and nitrogen compounds
Ad Neohim	Fertilizers and nitrogen compounds
Ad Mini-Marishki Baseyn	Lignite mining
Ad Ktsm	Lead, zinc and tin production
Ad Asarel-Medet	Manufacture of metal products
Ad Remoteks - Mini Maritsa - Iztok	Machinery manufacturer
Ad Kateks	Textile weaving

total population. The majority of the population (34.9%) resides in the Plovdiv oblast, followed by 18.6% in Stara Zagora, with the smallest share (7.3%) in the Smolyan oblast. The average density at 76 people per km² is close to the national average. The maximum density is recorded in the region of Plovdiv (112 people per km²), dropping as low as 48 people per km² in the region of Smolyan.

The share of the urban population is 62.9% of the regional total. In contrast to the heavily urbanised Plovdiv oblast, the southern parts are predominantly rural, reflecting their different level of economic development.

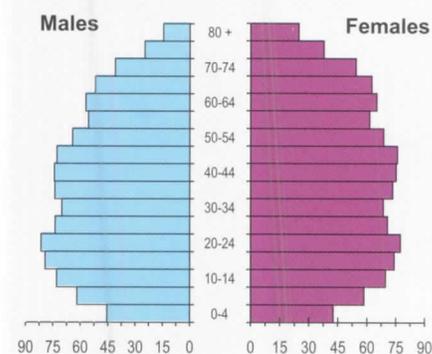
During the period 1992-1998, the region experienced a population decline of 1.7%, which is the second smallest drop nationally. The major reason for this was the high intensity of the migratory flows, with interregional migration higher here than in any other region. Some 79% of migrants moved to other parts of the region, while the rest have moved to the South-West and South-East regions or emigrated to other countries, especially to neighbouring Turkey, due to the large Turkish minority in South-Central region.

While the overall age structure of the population has worsened in recent years, it is nevertheless better than in most other regions. From 1992 to 1998, the share of the population aged 25 or less decreased by around 2.5%, reaching 32% in the end of the period. In contrast, the population aged 65 or higher has increased, numbering 15% of the total in 1998. The age structure of the population is most favourable in the oblasti of Kardzhali and Smolyan but has worsened substantially in Haskovo and Stara Zagora.

The life expectancy figure at 71.3 years is close to the national average but is higher only in the South-West region. Although the natural increment has

been negative in recent years, it is still better than the national average. The region is characterised by a low number of marriages, which has a depressing impact on the birth rate at 7.8 per 1 000 inhabitants. The death rate at 13.2 per 1 000 inhabitants is the lowest among the six regions. The infant mortality rate at 13.9 per 1 000 live births is also lower than the national average of 14.4, due to the well-developed health care infrastructure in the region's major towns. The population is heterogeneous in its ethnic and cultural composition, with Bulgarians forming 82.5% of the population, Turks 12.7%, and gypsies 3.9%.

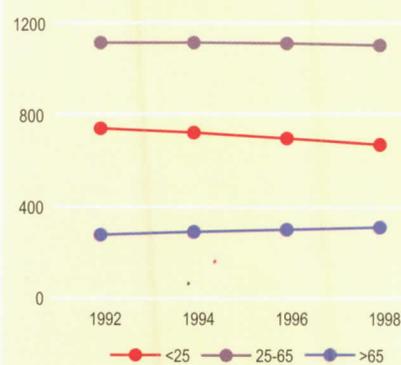
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



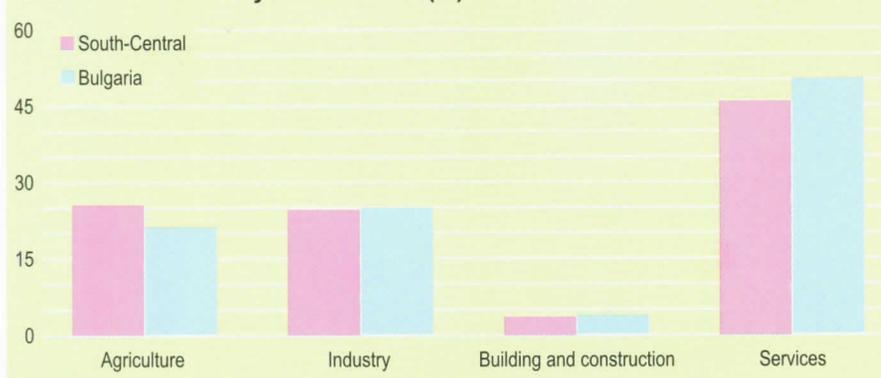
Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population 31.12.92	2126,7
Births	134,7
Deaths	184,1
Migration	-1,2
Population 31.12.98	2076,1

Population by age-groups (1 000)



Gross value-added by sector - 1998 (%)



Contrasting economic development

The regional economy contributes 23.5% to the country's GDP, which is the second highest figure after the South-West region. These two regions are the core of the country's economy, together generating more than half of total GDP. However, per capita GDP is only lower in the traditionally underdeveloped North-West region. A peculiarity of the value added structure is the almost equal share of value added from industry and agriculture in the regional total - around 25% per sector. The vast territory and various natural conditions result in contrasting economic development, ranging from agricultural specialisation, to highly industrialised zones and to a modern services-oriented economy in the regional centre of Plovdiv. A specific regional feature is the presence of more economic centres than in the rest of the country.

Agriculture contributes the largest share of all regions (28.5%) to the national value added figure. Agricultural land covers 47% of the area, which is second lowest after the South-West region, with arable land accounting for 62.5% of the agricultural area. This area is dominant

(92%) by grain fields, the rest being devoted to permanent crops. The region is the main producer of rice in the country, but produces also large quantities of wheat, maize and oats. Just under one third of the total vegetable production in the country is grown here, with potatoes and grapes having a traditionally high yield. The region contributes 92% to the country's total cotton yield.

The leading industrial sector in the region is energy production, generating around 33% of all electricity in the country. Around three-quarters of the country's total hydroelectric capacity is situated here. Substantial foreign capital has been invested in the forthcoming construction of the "Gorna Arda" hydroelectric plant. Furthermore, the region has thermal electric capacity in plants sited in the vicinity of the Maritsa-Iztok coal mines. Other well developed industrial branches are non-ferrous metallurgy, specialising in the production of lead and zinc in Kardzhali, and machine building, contributing about 23% to national machine building production. One well-developed industrial branch is

the textile industry, with major centres at Haskovo and Plovdiv. Last but not least is the strong timber-processing industry, generating around 30% of the processed timber in the country, the main centres being in Velingrad and Batak. The food industry has close links with the well-developed agricultural sector. As a result, the region is the second largest producer of canned fruit and vegetables, outpaced only by the North-Central region.

The services sector is based around the major tourist centre of Plovdiv. The Pamporovo resort, situated in the vicinity of Smolyan, is well known both in Bulgaria and in western Europe.

Income derived from farming

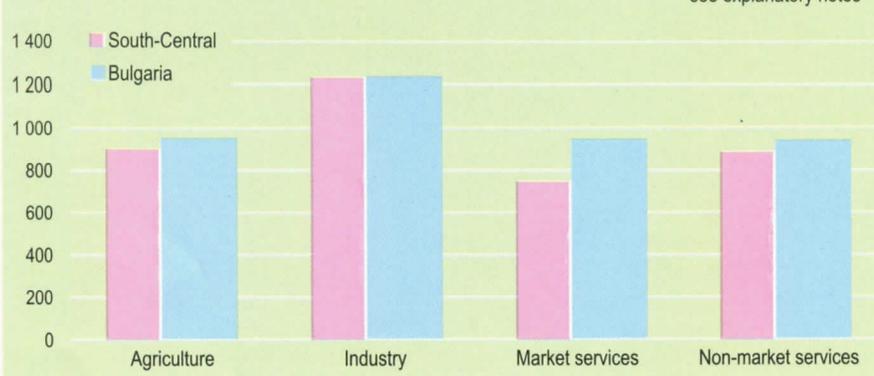
As in the whole country, the severe economic crisis at the end of 1997 caused substantial fluctuations in real wages.

At the end of 1998, average annual wages were around 4% lower than the national average. Measured by this indicator, wages were lower only in the North-West region. The highest wages were recorded in the energy branch, followed by the industrial one, where wages almost equalled the national average. The relatively low wage level in the region could be attributed to the large share of food and textile enterprises in the regional economy. The wages in these branches are lower than in the other industries, which has a negative impact on the overall wage level. Furthermore, the majority of the services sector serves the local population, which again entails low wages and salaries.

The main share of the household budget, around 55%, comes from wages and salaries. Income coming from pension benefits comprises a lower share than in any other region, the main reason being the low level of pensions in the food and textile industries. However, a large share of household income comes from farming, with households producing some of the food they consume and selling the surplus at market.

Wages by sector - 1998 (ECU) *

* see explanatory notes





Employment spread across economic sectors

While the activity rate at 49.2% is lower than the national average of 50.4%, it is, nevertheless the second highest after the South-West region. 25% of the country's employees reside in this region. Together with the South-West region these two regions supply more than half of the country's labour force.

The contrasts in development are reflected in the regional employment structure. While industry is the major employer in the region's highly industrialised areas, reaching as high as 42% in the region of Stara Zagora, services are prevalent in the regions of Plovdiv and Smolyan. Yet other parts of the region are specialised in agriculture, the share of employment in this sector reaching as high as 46% in the region of Kardzhali. Overall, the share of employment in industry (34%) is one of the highest nationally, being higher only in the North-Central region. The services sector is concentrated in the major towns, the share of employment in it amounting to 37%, which is one of the lowest shares among Bulgaria's regions.

The unemployment rate at 14% is one of

the lowest nationally, being lower only in the most developed region, South-West. Although the regional unemployment rate was at a similar level to the national average over the period 1993-95, since then it has gradually decreased, creating a widening gap between it and the national average. The lowest drop in total employment from 1995 to 1998 was recorded here, amounting to around 3%. The regional centre of Plovdiv enjoys the lowest unemployment (9%), whereas in the regions of Haskovo and Pazardjik it reaches as high as 22%. This substantial gap indicates the lagging development in the region's peripheral areas. The highest percentage of workers have been discharged from the non-market services branch, being almost twice the national figure. In contrast, the percentage of discharged workers from the industrial sector is the second smallest nationally. Part of a national programme for temporary employment and retraining of the working population is carried out in this region.

The female and male unemployment rates are almost equal, both being lower than the national average. An encouraging trend is the sustained decrease in the unemployment rate of those aged 25 or lower, reaching 31.8% in 1998, which is the second lowest figure after the South-West region, and is around 4% lower than the national average. Long-term unemployment at 51% is lower than the national figure, and also lower than in most of the regions.

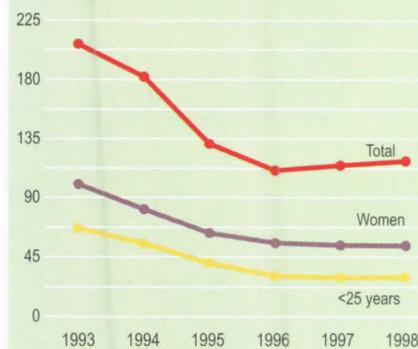
Unevenly developed transport infrastructure

Due to contrasting natural conditions and the differences in economic specialisation in the various areas of the region, the regional transport infrastructure is unevenly developed. Nevertheless, the region's central location and large territory puts it in a leading role in the country's transport infrastructure. Consequently, some of the main railway lines and road axes cross its area. Furthermore, parts of three European traffic corridors span this region. The only transport type, which is not developed here, is water transport, due to the lack of navigable waterways. Air transport is centred at Plovdiv.

Resident employment by sex (%)



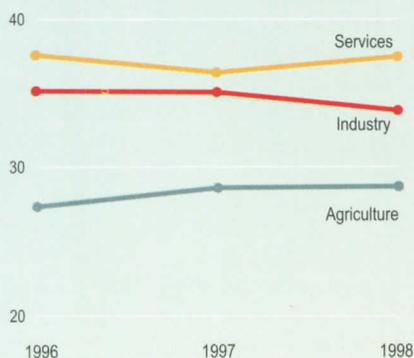
Unemployment (1 000)



The leading transport sector is the road one. The region has the highest road length in Bulgaria, accounting for 24.4% of the national figure. Around 22% of the regional roads are in the region of Plovdiv, while the smallest share, around 14.5%, belongs to Smolyan. Road density is 330 km per 1 000 km, and most roads, around 89.2%, have a hard surface. There are 130 km of highways here, the main ones being the Trakia and Maritsa highways. By number of vehicles the region is outpaced only by the South-West region.

Rail transport is very important to the regional transport infrastructure. The main routes are the Sofia-Plovdiv-Stara-Zagora-Burgas and the Sofia-Plovdiv-Svilengrad railway lines. The main railway hubs are located in Stara Zagora, Plovdiv and Dimitrovgrad, and most freight and passenger traffic passes through them.

Employment by sector (%)



Employment by age groups - 1998 (%)

	< 25 years	25-54 years	≥ 55 years
Men	9	81	11
Women	9	87	4
Total	9	84	8

Communications - 1998

	South-Central	Bulgaria
Length of road in km per km ²	0,29	0,31
Length of road in km per 1000 population	3,90	4,17
Telephone connections per 1000 population	341	387

Number of pupils - 1999

	Total
Pre-school	52 157
Primary	101 636
Lower secondary	96 496
Higher secondary (vocational/general)	84 519
Tertiary (higher education)	35 120
Total	369 928

Health care - 1998

	South-Central	Bulgaria
Hospitals	66	276
Doctors per 10 000 population	24,5	25,3
Hospital beds per 10 000 population	75,3	70,7

High pollution levels

Heavy exploitation of the region's natural resources has led to substantial environmental damage. The major sources of pollution are the non-ferrous metallurgy industry and ore mining. Furthermore, the toxic fumes from the large chain of thermal electric plants have caused severe problems for the region. The highest emissions of sulphur oxides nationwide were recorded in the region of Stara Zagora. Furthermore, there are high emissions of nitrogen oxides and ammonia pollution in the region of Haskovo. The cleanest atmosphere is observed in the region of Smolyan. Cutbacks in some economic activities, especially coal mining, have resulted in some improvements to environmental conditions.

The extraction of lignite deposits in the region of Stara Zagora, where Bulgaria's largest lignite mines are located, has led to a substantial accumulation of heaps of tailings and subsequent changes in the region's topography. The Maritsa River carries more

untreated wastewater than anywhere else in Bulgaria.

Water consumption in the region at 94 litres per capita per day is lower than the national average of 102 litres per capita per day. 15.4% of the population has water restrictions imposed on it, rising as high as 38.9% in the region of Stara Zagora. All settlements have electricity supplies, most of them being connected to sewerage also.

While the region has a good telecommunications network, some peripheral areas suffer from a shortage of telephone lines. As a result, the number of telephone lines per 1 000 inhabitants at 341 is the lowest nationally.

Developed public infrastructure

Many historic monuments are sited here, including the ancient theatre in Plovdiv, which dates back many centuries. Overall, the region's extensive cultural heritage makes it one of the country's major cultural centres, based around the towns of Plovdiv, Stara

Zagora and Smolyan.

The tertiary education sector comprises 6 universities and 12 colleges with a total of over 4 600 teachers, and 13.4% of all students study here. The main academic centre is the "Paisiy Hilendarski" university in Plovdiv. The region also has the largest share of pupils in primary schools.

Most of the health care infrastructure is concentrated in the major regional towns, thus hampering service to the outlying population. 66 health care institutions, or 24% of the country's total, are located in this region, which is the highest figure nationally. The region also has the largest number of hospitals, accounting for 22.5% of the national figure. Some 24% of Bulgaria's doctors work in the regional hospitals, the number of patients per doctor being 408.

The region has 2 opera-houses, 16 theatres, 60 cinema and more than 2 000 libraries. An important annual event is the international trade fair in Plovdiv, where various firms both from Bulgaria and western Europe present their innovations and new products.



Haskovo

Shared border with Greece and Turkey

Haskovo region is situated in South Bulgaria, and is the only region to border both the southern neighbouring Republics of Greece and Turkey. The region has an area of 5 520 km² or about 5% of the national territory, and is the country's 5th largest region. The population numbers 285 000 inhabitants, or 3.5% of the national total, with urban population amounting to 68.4%. The mean population density at 52 inhabitants per km² is well below the national average of 74 per km².

Present day Haskovo region has been appreciated since ancient times, and traces of its rich historical past can still be found today, including the remains of a Roman villa, Armira, near Ivaylovgrad, and the mediaeval fortress Mezek.

Geographically the region covers parts of the Upper Thracian lowlands, the Haskovo hills and parts of the Eastern Rhodopi. This determines both the flat and undulating nature of its relief.

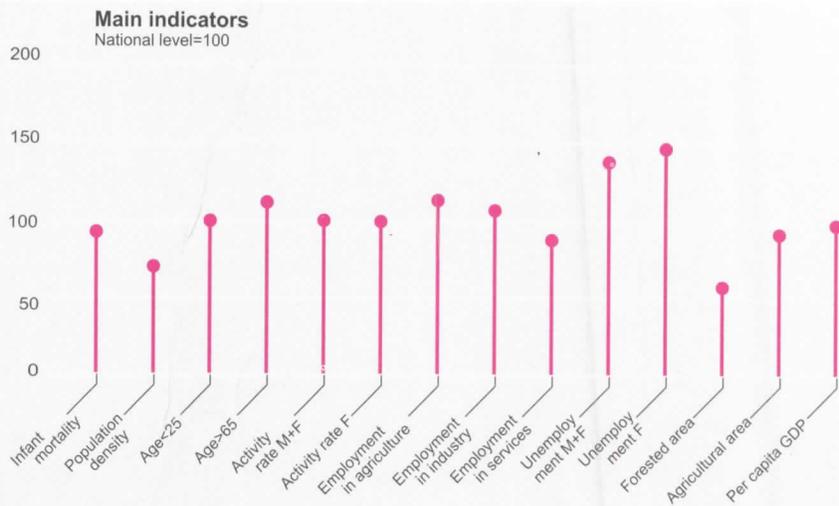
Its transitional Mediterranean climate gives it its hot summers and mild winters as well as insufficient precipitation. The river Maritsa, the deepest Bulgarian river, cuts across the region. The mineral springs at Marichleri and Haskovski Mineralni Bani are used for spa cures. The soil consists of various types of humus soils.

The lead-zinc ore deposits at Madzharovo and the marble deposits at Topolovgrad and Ivaylovgrad are some of the region's more significant mineral resources, and some lignite coal is also extracted here.



The brewery at Haskovo produces one of the high-quality beer brands in Bulgaria.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Border location and cross-border co-operation

One of Haskovo region's strongest assets is the intensive cross-border co-operation with the administrative units of its two southern neighbours, respectively Edrene in the Republic of Turkey and Evros County in the Republic of Greece. This involves the exchange of goods, sharing of know-how and experience in administrative management practices, environmental protection, transport and other activities. There are also two important border crossings with these two countries in the region, situated at Kapitan Andreevo (Turkey) and Novo Selo (Greece).

In addition to major national highways, the trans-continental London-Calcutta highway also runs through the region. The region has a well-developed market

structure, which includes the duty free zone at the city of Svilengrad, labour and stock exchanges.

This part of the country, however, faces some problems relating to the quality of its road network in certain municipalities, the emigration of inhabitants of Turkish origin, and poor infrastructure provision in rural areas.

Depopulation, particularly in the municipality of Ivaylovgrad, and in the far southern parts of the region in the area of Sakar Mountain, is one of the most acute problems. As a consequence of this, entire rural communities, especially in the border regions, are disappearing off the map of the region.

Another problem specific to Haskovo region is the shortage of drinking water.



tion has been observed in recent years. Industry continues to play a leading role in the economic development of Haskovo region. The processing industry covers a number of sectors, above all machine tool engineering and metal processing, textile and knitwear industries and food and beverages production. Characteristic features of the region are the production of nitrate fertilizers at Dimitrovgrad, machine tools and equipment for the tobacco industry at Haskovo.

Arable land accounts for 33.9% of the region's area. Agriculture is specialised in cereals, and vegetables, as well as having a good tradition of melon and watermelon production.

The employment level of the population is below the national average. The number of those employed is 204 per 1 000 inhabitants. The unemployment level at 21.8% is substantially above the average and is the 6th highest figure nationally.

Future developments of the transport infrastructure include the proposed routes of two international transport corridors, No. 4 and No. 9, which are scheduled to traverse its area. The international Kalotina-Sofia-Plovdiv-Svilengrad highway and the parallel railroad are the backbone of the region's transport infrastructure. However, road density at 0.26 km per km² is below the national average. The density of telephones per 1 000 inhabitants is also below the national average (275 compared to the national average of 387 telephones). The social and market structure is more advanced in the cities. In this sense the cities of Haskovo and Dimitrovgrad, where a large portion of the social services are concentrated, stand out particularly.

Which regions are similar to Haskovo region?

Age structure:

- 31 % under 25
- Liège (B)
- Zeeland (NL)
- Osrednjeslovenska (SI)

Land use:

- 18 % forest
- Satu Mare (RO)
- Haute-Normandie (F)
- Gelderland (NL)

Population density:

- 52 inhabitants per km²
- Blekinge lan (S)
- Ardeche (F)
- Goriska (SI)

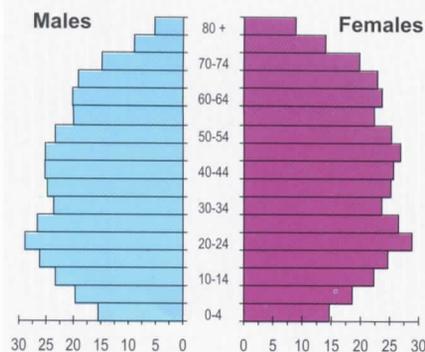
The construction of Trakiets Dam and other water-conservation schemes is being accelerated with a view to trying to overcome this problem.

Yet a third problem of the region relates to the process of the declining capitalisation of the area. The value of the long-term material assets in the smaller municipalities shows a downward trend.

Positive developments in transport

The demographic development of Haskovo region is similar to that of the other regions in the country. As a consequence of unfavourable demographic processes (a diminishing birth rate and rising death rate) a drop in the popula-

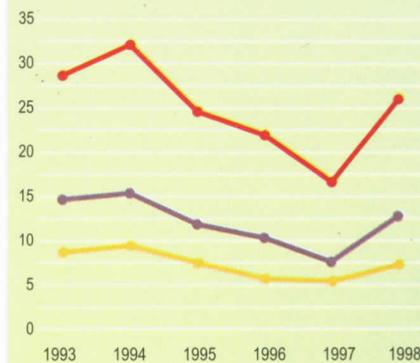
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	295,2
Births		17,9
Deaths		29,1
Migration		0,7
Population	31.12.98	284,8

Unemployment (1 000)





Kardzhali

The Eastern Rhodopi Mountains

The region, with Kardzhali as its administrative centre, is situated in Southern Bulgaria. It borders Smolyan, Plovdiv and Haskovo regions. To the south the regional boundary overlaps with part of the state frontier between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Greece. Within its present boundaries, Kardzhali region covers an area of 3 209 km² or 2.9% of the national territory. It is divided into 7 municipalities, comprising 472 settlements, including 5 cities. Some of the larger cities are Kardzhali, Momchilgrad and Krumovgrad.

In 1998 the population was 211 000 inhabitants or 2.6% of the national total, with around a third living in urban locations. The average population density at 66 inhabitants per km² is slightly below average.

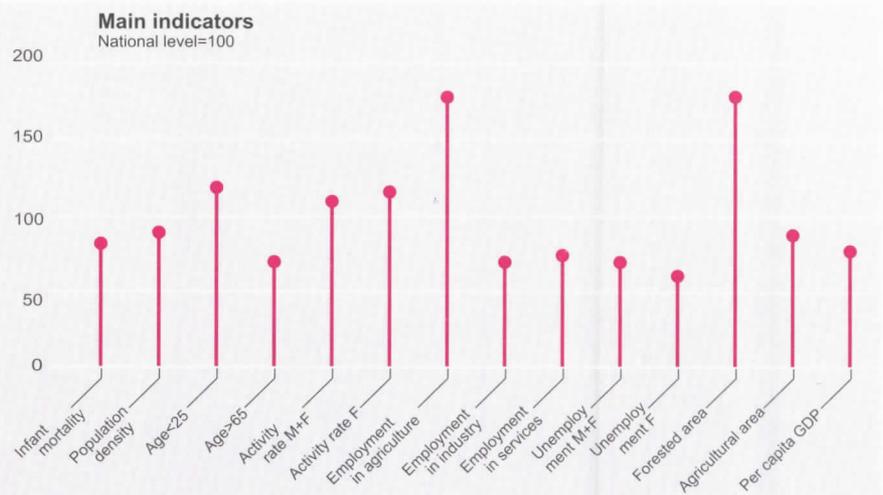
The physical geography of the region is influenced by the fact that it extends over large sections of the Rhodopi Mountains, making its relief undulating, mountainous and severely dissected by the river valleys. These peculiarities of the relief are the reason for the fact that a large portion of the region's area is occupied by forest. This geographic diversity is complemented by the climatic characteristics, which is transitional continental with some Mediterranean climatic influence along the valley of the Arda River. Summers are hot and winters mild.

The region is drained by the river Arda and its larger tributaries, the rivers Varbitsa, Krumovitsa, Borovitsa and Perperek. Two of the three dams built on the river Arda, Studen Kladenets and Kardzhali, are situated here as well. Although soils are predominantly various types of forest soils, along the river valleys alluvial-meadow soils prevail. Among the region's various mineral materials lead-zinc ore and chromium ore are of greatest economic significance. Other resources include deposits of mica, trass, feldspar, perlite, and zeolite.



Great potential for the region's future development lies in the abundance of water resources.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Opportunities for cross-border co-operation

In Kardzhali region the right conditions, such as numerous historical, archaeological and natural landmarks, are in place for the development of different forms of tourism, such as cultural tourism, hiking, hunting, and angling. The setting up of a new border-crossing point between Bulgaria and Greece in the region of the Makaza Pass will improve conditions for the development of tourism as well as increase opportunities for other forms of cross-border co-operation.

Despite the current difficulties faced by the sector, the development of tobacco cultivation has good prospects for fur-

ther growth. Furthermore, quite large amounts have already been invested in the region, particularly in the clothing industry.

While road density in the region is above average (0.42 km per km²), roads here tend to be lower class C and D roads, which are in need of up-grading. Together with depopulation, this is one of the most acute problems faced by the region.



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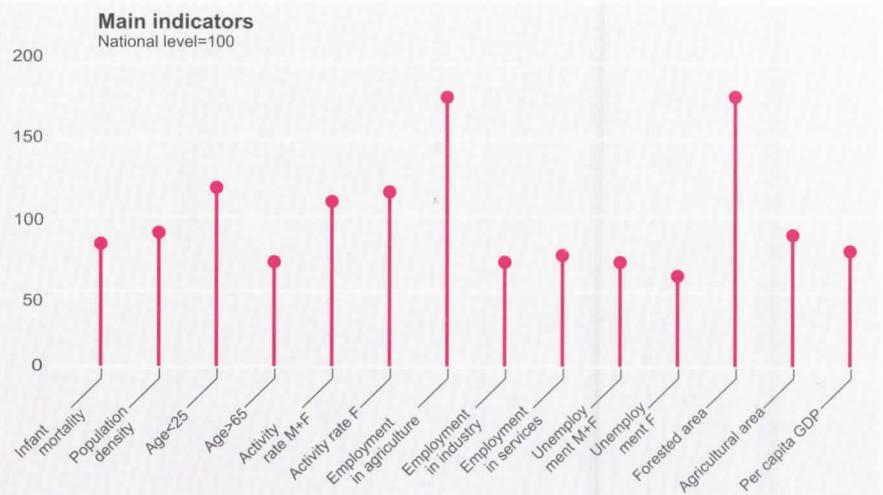
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Photo by Peter Dimov



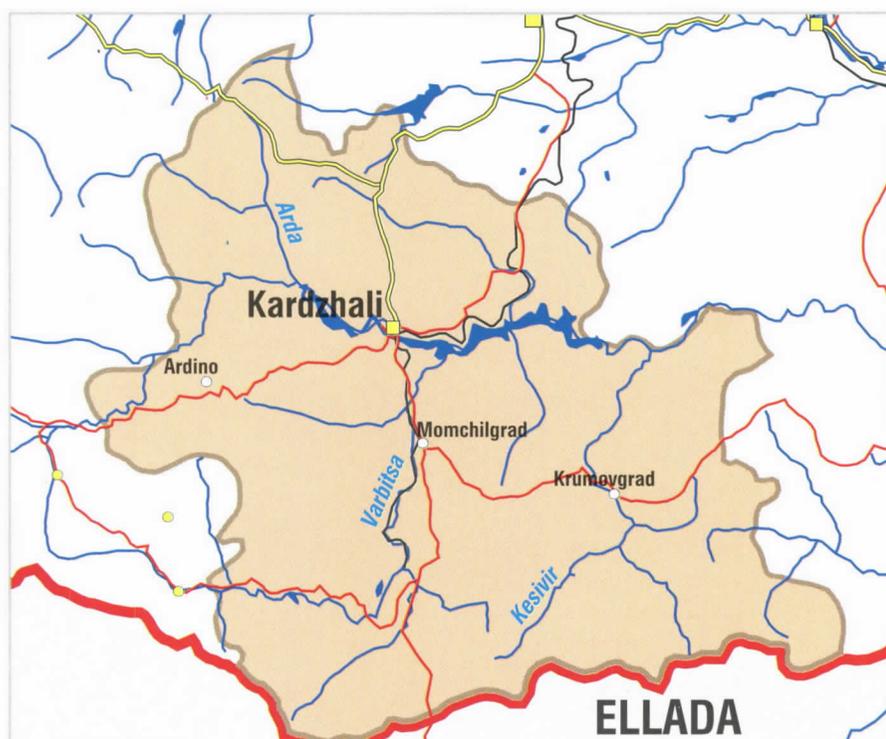
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Which regions are similar to Kardzhali region?

Population density:
66 inhabitants per km²
Siena (I)
Drome (F)
Mehedinti (RO)

Age structure:
37 % under 25
Norte (P)
Flevoland (NL)
Kesk-Eesti (EE)

Land use:
49 % agriculture
Utrecht (NL)
Lorraine (F)
Maramures (RO)

Non-ferrous metallurgy and tobacco growing

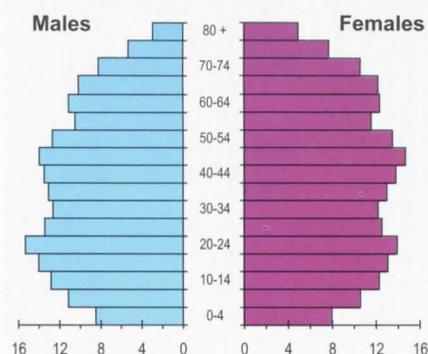
The majority (around two-thirds) of the population belongs to the Turkish ethnic community. The population under 25 years accounts for 37%, while the share of those aged 65 or more is just 11%. This is the largest gap between these two indicators nationally and reveals the positive age structure of the population. The number of inhabitants has decreased both as a result of low natural population growth and emigration by those of Turkish origin for economic reasons. Infant mortality at 11.7 per 1 000 live births is well below the national average of 14.4. Industry employs around 21% of the active population, which is substantially

below the national average of 31%. The region's industrial development was dependant mainly on the strong mining industry, but this activity has declined in recent years. The main sectors are non-ferrous metallurgy, machines tool engineering and metal processing. The cities of Kardzhali, Momchilgrad, Krumovgrad and Dzhebel are the major industrial centres.

Arable land accounts for 19.6% of the total area of Kardzhali region. Agriculture dominates the regional economy, with a share of 36% in the regional value added. Furthermore, the proportion employed in this sector is 46%, which is one of the highest figures nationally. Agriculture covers tobacco growing, of mainly oriental tobaccos, and stock breeding (sheep, goats and cattle).

The private sector occupies an important place in the regional economy. The number of small and medium-sized enterprises is growing. Those employed in the regional economy account for 2.4% of the total number employed nationally. At 11.2% the unemployment level is below the national average, while at the same time the number of persons employed per 1 000 inhabitants (162 people) is below the national average (248 people). Rail transport in the region is limited to a section of the Ruse-Dimitrovgrad-Kardzhali-Podkova railroad. The communications network is less developed than the national average, with a fewer than average number of telephones per 1 000 inhabitants. The social infrastructure also features parameters that are below average. One medical doctor caters for 602 inhabitants (as against 396 people nationally) and 6 hospital beds are provided per 1 000 inhabitants, which is below the national average.

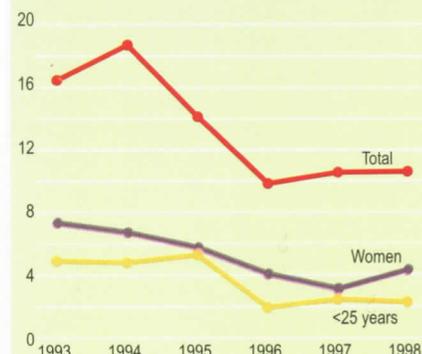
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	213,9
31.12.92	
Births	14,6
Deaths	13,7
Migration	-3,5
Population	211,3
31.12.98	

Unemployment (1 000)





Pazardzhik

Forested, but fertile

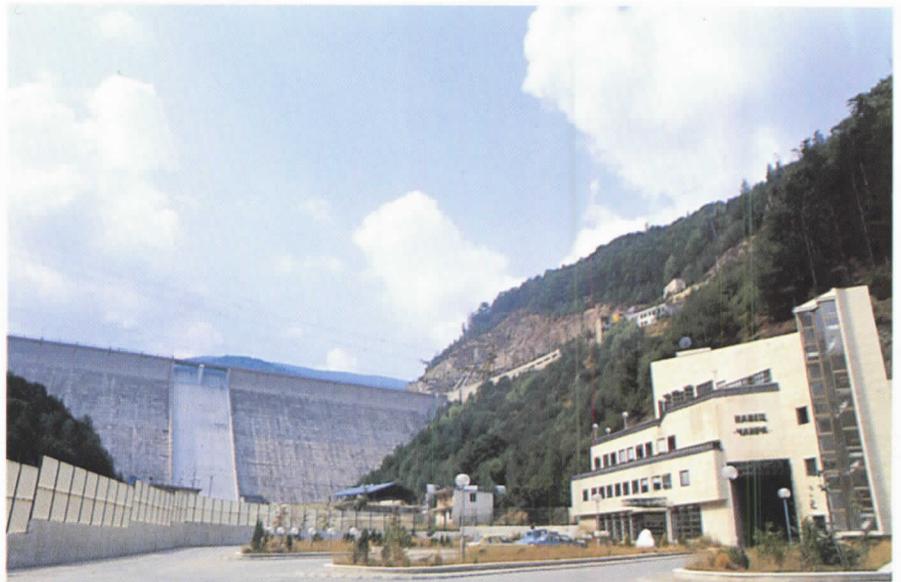
Bordering the regions of Blagoevgrad, Sofia, Smolyan and Plovdiv, this region, with the city of Pazardzhik as its regional centre, is situated in the central part of South Bulgaria. The total area of Pazardzhik region is 4 459 km², accounting for 4.0% of the national territory. The population is 318 000 inhabitants and the population density 71 inhabitants per km². The urban population is 57% of the total. There are 11 municipalities in the region. Some of the larger cities are Pazardzhik, Velingrad, Panagyurishte, Peshtera and Septemvri.

In terms of location, the region straddles busy roads connecting Western and Central Europe to the Middle East and Asia. For centuries, the geographic situation of Pazardzhik region has had a positive impact on the development of this area. In the Middle Ages, many settlements situated along the busy roads used to perform the functions of fortified points, market places and handicraft centres.

Geographically, Pazardzhik region extends over parts of the Western Rhodopi, Rila, Sredna Gora Proper and Ihtiman Sredna Gora mountains, as well as the western end of the Pazardzhik-Plovdiv plain. The relief is quite diverse, alternating from flat to undulating to mountainous.

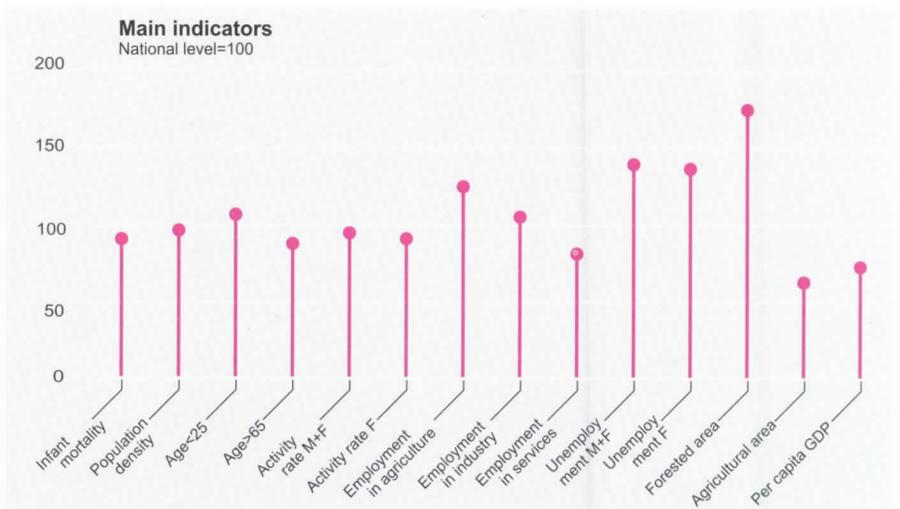
The climate is transitional continental (in the flatland) and mountainous (in the highland areas of the region). The river Maritsa and its larger tributaries, the Yadenitsa, Chepinska, Stara Reka, and Luda Yana, drain the region. Thermal mineral springs are found at Velingrad, Nelovo, Varvara, Bratsigovo, Strelcha, and Banya.

Soil types are characterised by rich diversity, from highly fertile soils in the Pazardzhik-Plovdiv plain to poorer soils in the mountainous areas. With over half the region's area covered by forests, this is well above average. Deciduous forests are found in the area of Sredna Gora and part of the Rhodopi and coniferous forests predominate in the Rhodopi.



The Chaira pumped storage plant is the main supplier of electricity in the region.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Active exploitation of mineral resources

The positive characteristics spurring regional development are firstly related to the abundance of mineral and raw material resources, of which the non-ferrous metal ore (copper) deposits at the Panagyurishte mining basin are of the greatest significance. They have been subject to active exploitation for several decades now. Other actively exploited sources of raw mineral materials are the marble deposits near Velingrad and limestone near the village of Ognyanovo. The region has considerable potential for hydro-electric power. One of the biggest hydro-power facilities, the Batak Hydro-Power Cascade, has been constructed in its area.

The existing natural and historical landmarks, and the presence of numerous thermal water springs are factors to

encourage the development of tourism, which is already well developed in certain settlements such as Velingrad, Batak, and Rakitovo.

Among the positive regional features is the good demographic situation, the region having one of the most progressive age structures in the country.

The major problems in the development of Pazardzhik region have been identified as the different degree of capitalisation of the territory and the high unemployment rate, which is substantially above average. The latter could be attributed mainly to the restructuring of the economy during the transition period. Another problem is environmental pollution, as high emission of sulphur oxides have been recorded here.



Bulgarian Moslems in the municipality of Velingrad.

Industry has a major function in the economy of Pazardzhik region, contributing 24% to the regional value added and employing around one third of those working. The mining industry, the largest enterprise in the region is engaged in mining non-ferrous metal ores. Some of the larger industrial centres are the city of Pazardzhik (food and beverages production, textile industry), Peshtera (chemical and pharmaceutical industry, energy generation), and Velingrad (wood-working).

Arable land accounts for a small share of the region's area (21%) because of the predominantly mountainous relief of the region. However, the fertile soils have spurred agricultural development of fruit, vegetables and cereals (including rice) in the Pazardzhik-Plovdiv plain. Potatoes and hops (Velingrad, Rakitovo), cherries, oil crops (Panagyurishte, Strelcha), strawberries, and raspberries are grown in the hilly areas of the region.

The employment indicators reveal a worrying picture of employment conditions in the region. While the activity rate is slightly below average, the unemployment level at 22% is one of the highest in the country.

Road network density at 0.27 km per km² is below the national average of 0.34 km per km². A section of the Trakia Highway and a section of the A-Class Sofia-Pazardzhik-Plovdiv road cross the region. The railway infrastructure consists of a section of the Septemvri-Dobrinishte railroad.

Which regions are similar to Pazardzhik region?

Area:

- 4 459 km²
- Marijampole (LT)
- Hautes-Pyrénées (F)
- Pontevedra (E)

Population:

- 318 000 inhabitants
- Achaia (EL)
- Arezzo (I)
- Podravska (SI)

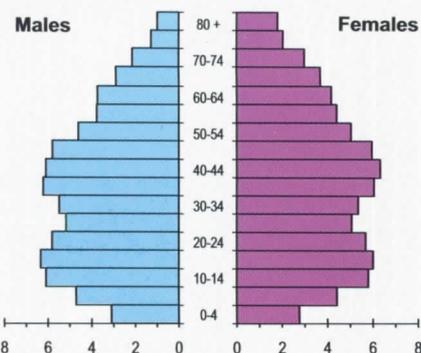
Land use:

- 53 % forest
- Liguria (I)
- Pohjois-Suomi (F)
- Suceava (RO)

Better than average demographic profile

The region enjoys a better demographic profile than most regions. With a birth rate of 8.5 and death rate of 12.6 per 1 000 inhabitants, respectively, the region's values for these two indicators are above average. While the natural population growth is negative (-4.1 per 1 000 inhabitants), this rate is, nevertheless, one of the lowest nationally. The age structure indicates that the age group under 25 years accounts for 33% of the population, while the share of those aged 65 and over is only 14%. Infant mortality at 13 per 1 000 live births is close to the national average of 14.4. The region is inhabited by a large numbers of ethnic gypsies in the municipalities of Pazardzhik, and Peshtera, and by

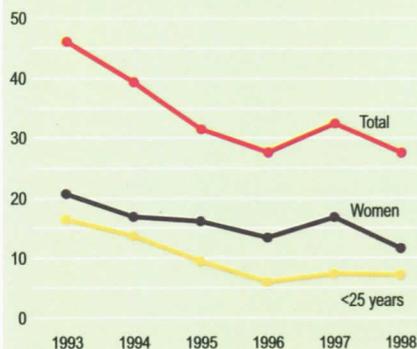
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	312,2
Births	22,7
Deaths	28,1
Migration	-3,1
Population	317,7

Unemployment (1 000)





Plovdiv

The heart of Thrace

Plovdiv region is situated in the heart of Bulgaria. Bordered by the regions of Pazardzhik, Smolyan, Kardzhali, Haskovo, Stara Zagora and Lovech, it covers an area of 5 966 km² or 5.4% of the national territory. The region is divided into 16 municipalities, of which the regional centre of Plovdiv (the second-biggest city in Bulgaria by population size), and the towns of Asenovgrad, and Karlovo stand out among the region's 16 main towns.

The total population of the region is 725 000 inhabitants or 8.8% of the national total. Both in overall population terms and by population density (121 inhabitants per km²), Plovdiv region has the second highest figure nationally after Sofia (capital) region.

Because the region extends over parts of the Balkan mountain range, Sredna Gora, the Rhodopi and the Upper Thracian lowlands, its relief is quite varied.

In former times this area was inhabited by Thracians who founded many settlements, the most prominent being Evmolpias, the site of today's Plovdiv. Under Philip of Macedonia's rule the city was called after him, before being changed to Pulpudeva by the Slavs. In the Middle Ages, many of these settlements grew into important trade and manufacturing centres, including Philibe (the other name of present-day Plovdiv), and Stanimaka (present-day Asenovgrad).

The climate is moderately continental with traces of a mountainous climate in the highland areas.

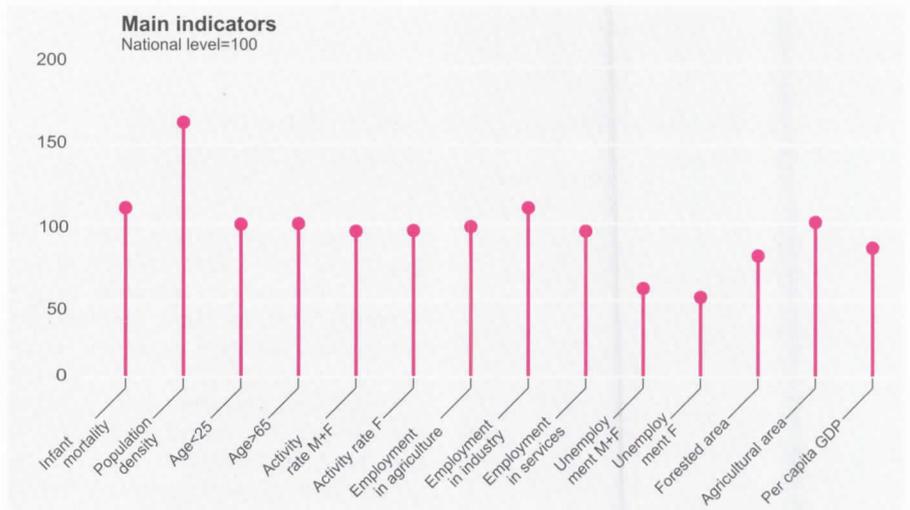
The deepest Bulgarian river, the Maritsa and many of its tributaries run through the region. Thermal mineral water springs occur at Hisarya, and Narechenski Bani. Alluvial-meadow and humus soils are characteristic for the lowlands, plains and valleys of the region.

Mineral resources are of a more limited variety. Those of significance are lead-zinc ore (Laki municipality) and deposits of building materials.



For many years, the Plovdiv fair has been Bulgaria's major economic forum.

Photo by Peter Dimov



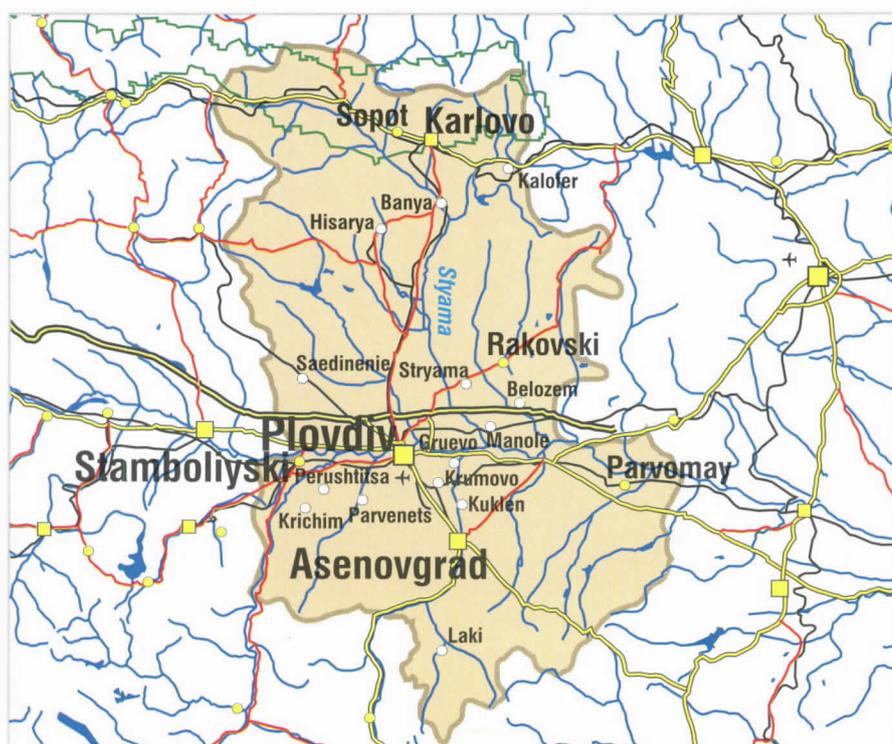
Advantageous location, developed economy

A major positive feature of Plovdiv region is the considerable human resources in terms of quantity and level of professional qualifications. It is also a major academic centre, with numerous educational establishments. The solid research potential of the city of Plovdiv is a further indisputable advantage.

Another regional advantage is its well-developed economy with a strong services sector. Furthermore, along with the capital Sofia, the region enjoys the lowest unemployment level nationally. A duty free zone plays an important role in the regional economy. Bulgaria's only international trade fair is held here, creating further opportunities for future economic development.

Major roads of national and international importance traverse the region, and

the crossroads location of the region makes it a natural economic and transport centre for South Bulgaria. It has a powerful economic impact on most of the regions in this part of the country. This circumstance, coupled with the existing broadly diversified infrastructure, is an important prerequisite for the attraction of foreign and local investors. Problems in the development of the region have so far been particularly related to the consequences of restructuring its industry and the agrarian sector. The existing specialisation of certain manufacturers to one or two product lines limits the capacity for flexible technological and product restructuring under present market conditions. The problems in the agrarian sector refer to the slow recovery of the region's posi-



per 1 000 inhabitants is above the national average, while the death rate at 13.4 per 1 000 inhabitants is below it. Infant mortality at 16 per 1 000 live births is above average. Worth mentioning is the slightly higher than average life expectancy (71.3 years).

The region produces 7.5% of the national GDP, which is one of the highest shares among the regions. Services contribute more than a half to the regional value added, while agriculture holds the smallest share (17%).

A distinctive feature of the regional economy is the variety of industries, the major ones being perfumery and cosmetics, the chemical industry, fur and leather industry and textile and knitwear. The major industrial centres with long-standing traditions are the cities of Plovdiv, Asenovgrad, Karlovo, Stamboliyski, Parvomay, Sopot, and Laki (mining).

The agrarian sector is concerned with intensive crop growing, such as vegetables, fruit, vines, and tobacco. Specific features of agriculture in the region are rice growing in the municipality of Maritsa, and rose growing in the municipality of Karlovo. Arable land covers 38.8% of the region.

The unemployment level (9%) is the lowest rate nationally along with the capital Sofia. The services sector is the major employer with 41%, followed by industry and agriculture.

Parts of the roads of European corridors No.4 and No.8 will be constructed on the basis of the existing sections of the Trakia and Maritsa highways, while other sections are pending construction. The region also has an airport.

Major components of the business infrastructure of the region are the Plovdiv International Fair and the duty free zone in the city of Plovdiv. The city of Plovdiv is a university centre with one university and six other higher educational establishments.

Which regions are similar to Plovdiv region?

Area:

5 966 km²

Var (F)

Alto Alentejo (P)

Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg (HU)

Population density:

121 inhabitants per km²

Plon (D)

Pordenone (I)

Pomorskie (PL)

Employment structure:

41 % services

Dolenjska (SI)

Dytiki Makedonia (EL)

Centro (P)

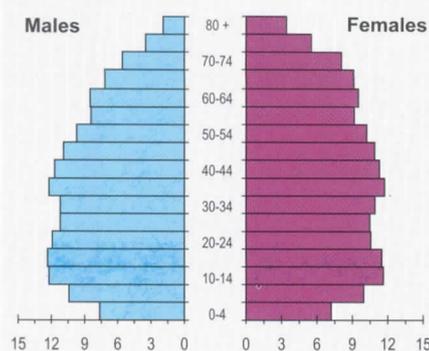
tion in rice, fruit and vegetable growing. A potential problem is related to the uneven development of the intercity industrial agglomeration of Plovdiv-Asenovgrad-Stamboliyski-Pazardzhik, as well as the lack of inter-regional coordination on the implementation of projects such as the southern Bulgarian irrigation canal.

Several environmental "hot spots" of soil, air and water pollution have been identified within the region.

Processing industries and well-developed agriculture

While a certain ageing of the population has been noted, the age structure is fairly positive, with the population under 25 amounting to 31% compared to 16% aged 65 or higher. The birth rate at 8.2

Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	734,4
Births		45,3
Deaths		64,3
Migration		9,3
Population	31.12.98	724,6

Unemployment (1 000)





Smolyan

Country's most mountainous region

Situated in Southern Bulgaria, Smolyan region has an area of 3 195 km², which represents 2.9% of the national territory. It shares a border with the Bulgarian regions of Plovdiv, Pazardzhik, Kardzhali and Blagoevgrad, while to the south the regional boundary overlaps with the state frontier of the Republic of Greece. In administrative terms it comprises 10 municipalities, which differ considerably in terms of area, population, socio-economic indicators and infrastructure. There are 242 settlements here, including 8 cities, the largest of which are Smolyan, Zlatograd, Madan, Devin and Chepelare.

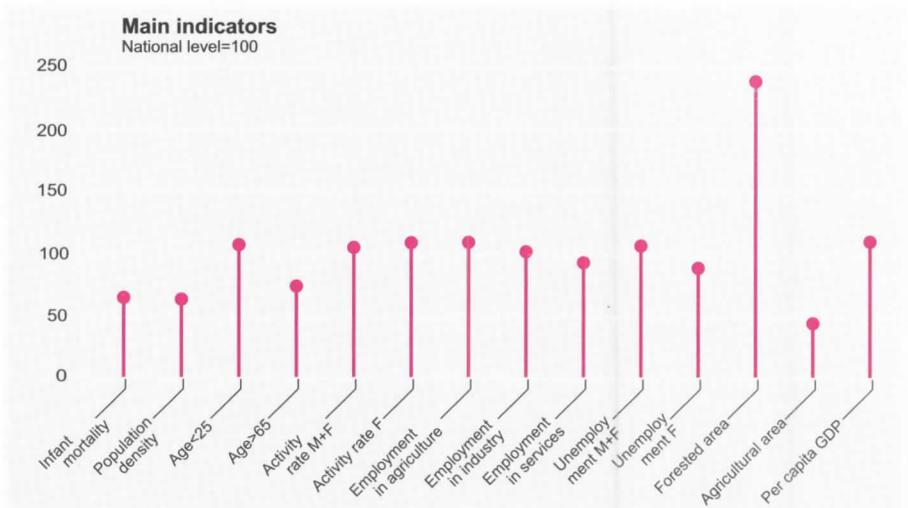
In 1998, Smolyan region had 152 000 inhabitants or 1.8% of the total population of Bulgaria. The mean population density at 48 inhabitants per km² is considerably lower than the national average of 74 inhabitants per km².

The climate is predominantly a mountainous one, whereas in the south-eastern parts of the region it is transitional Mediterranean. The Arda, Vacha, and Chepelarska Reka rivers flow through Smolyan region but the Smolyan lakes and the thermal mineral springs near Devin, Mihalkovo, Beden, and Banite are in fact the region's main sources of water. The forest vegetation consists of primarily deciduous trees (at lower altitudes) and coniferous trees (in the highland belts).



Famous for its pristine nature, Smolyan enjoys one of the cleanest environments in the country.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Nature as a regional asset

With respect to its physical geography, Smolyan region is characterised by considerable diversity. The fact that it covers substantial portions of the Western Rhodopi is reflected in its physical and geographic characteristics. The relief has a definite mountainous character, which in turn has a considerable impact on the entire regional development in terms of socio-economic aspects, settlement patterns and infrastructure.

The region is rich in mineral resources such as lead-zinc ores, which are found in the Madan, Nedelino and Mihalkovo ore fields, as well as fluorite, granite and syenite.

Currently, development of Smolyan region is characterised by problems ensuing from stagnation in the mining

and processing industries, as well as the shortage of investment on any significant scale. The less developed technical infrastructure and social services also hamper future regional expansion. Future development of the region will be oriented towards opportunities for more efficient use of the region's resource base. Among its objectives are the development of hydro-energy, tourism and the potential in organic agriculture that could play a leading role in the regional economy.

The border location of the region is one of the main advantages for the development of cross-border co-operation with neighbouring communities in Greece.



the number of those employed per 1 000 inhabitants was barely 165 people. The unemployment level at 16.9% is slightly above the national figure of 16%.

Extractive industries (ore mining, timber industry), woodworking and the food and beverages industry are important to the economy of Smolyan region. Mining and froth floatation of ore and non-ferrous metals are the leading economic sectors. The services sector is also important, accounting for 40% of the region's employees and adding 41% to the regional value added. Among the leading activities in this sector are tourism, commerce, and transport and communications.

Arable land occupies only 6% of the region's area (the lowest figure nationally), which hampers agricultural development. As a result, the lowest yields from the main agricultural crops are found here. However, the agricultural sector employs 29% of employees and contributes around 44% to the regional value added. This could be attributed to the high yield from some specific agricultural activities, such as tobacco and potato growing in the lower southern parts of the region. Fish farming is also a specific sector developed here.

The region has a total road length of 1 318 km, and with a road density of 0.41 km per km² this is considerably above average. Roads are mainly C- and D-Class roads. Telephone connections per 1 000 inhabitants is somewhat below average at 357 compared to 387 nationally.

The population avails of the services of 1 doctor per 416 inhabitants as against 396 nationally. The best-developed infrastructure may be found in the city of Smolyan, with a theatre, a regional hospital, museums, public libraries, and numerous educational establishments. Of note for the tourist sector is the internationally renowned Pamporovo resort, which is situated here.

Which regions are similar to Smolyan region?

Population:

- 152 000 inhabitants
- Norheim (D)
- Blackpool (UK)
- Oost-Groningen (NL)

Age structure:

- 12 % over 65
- Norte (P)
- Pohjois-Suomi (FIN)
- Koroska (SI)

Employment structure:

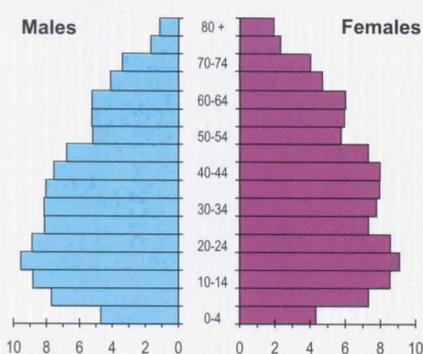
- 31 % industry
- Stereia Ellada (EL)
- West-Vlaanderen (B)
- Hajdu-Bihar (HU)

Extractive industries and tourism

The region suffered a drop in its population in the period 1995-1998, amounting to 2.9% (and the highest in the South-Central region). Although a growing number of settlements are being depopulated, the region's age structure is balanced. The share of the age group below 25 is 33%, while those over 65 account for 12%, the latter being one of the lowest shares nationally. Furthermore, life expectancy figures are some of the highest in the country. Both the birth rate at 7.0 per 1 000 inhabitants and the death rate at 10.4 per 1 000 inhabitants are among the lowest in Bulgaria, which holds true for the infant mortality rate also.

A mismatch of demand and supply is observed in the labour market. By 1998

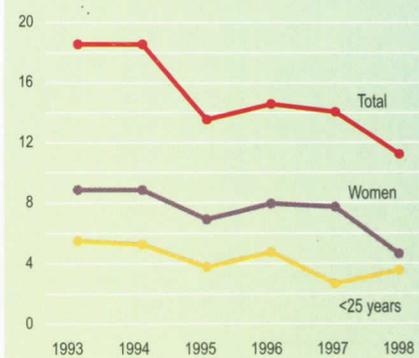
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	159,8
Births		9,4
Deaths		10,6
Migration		-6,9
Population	31.12.98	151,8

Unemployment (1 000)





Stara Zagora

A corner of Northern Thrace

Stara Zagora City is the administrative centre of this region in the central part of South Bulgaria. The region has an area of 5 147 km² or 4.6% of the total national territory. It is divided into 11 municipalities, which are diverse in terms of area, population size and social and economic development. These municipalities have 205 settlements, including 10 cities, the largest of which are Stara Zagora, Kazanlak, and Chirpan.

The population of the region is 386 000 inhabitants, which represents 4.7% of the national total, and makes it the 5th largest region. The population density at 75 inhabitants per km² is on average, while the urban population accounts for 67.8% of the total.

The region is surrounded on all sides by other Bulgarian regions and has no external borders, while roads of national and international significance cross through it.

The traces of life over many centuries can be found here in Thracian settlements and tomb vaults (the Kazanlak Tomb vault), remains of fortresses and necropolises.

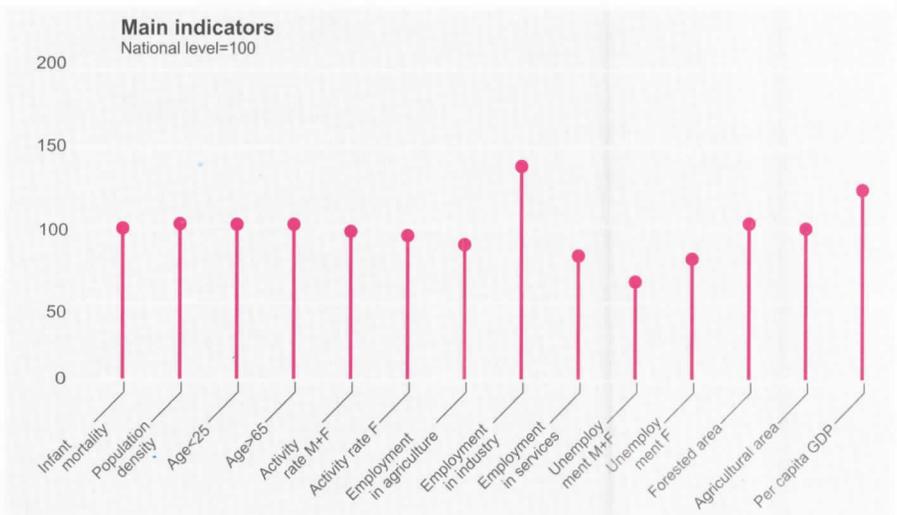
The region extends over the Stara Zagora plain, parts of Sredna Gora, the southern slopes of the Balkan mountain range and the Kazanlak Valley, making the region's landscape and climate quite diverse. One-third of the region is covered by mountains and forest. Summers are hot and winters cold. The precipitation rate in lowland areas is insufficient.

The major river artery is the river Tundzha and its tributaries, while there are mineral springs at Pavel Banya, Yagoda, Ovoshtnik and Starozagorski Mineralni Bani.

The mineral resources comprise deposits of lignite, brown and black coal, barites and gypsum. Of these, the deposits of lignite coal at the Eastern Maritsa coal basin are of the highest economic value because of their use for heat and power generation.



The Russian Church at Sheynovo is a symbol of the crucial battle for Bulgaria's liberation in 1877. Photo by Peter Dimov



Good development prospects

The region possesses the biggest deposits of lignite coal in Bulgaria, as well as having high-capacity energy facilities, a number of well-developed industrial sectors and intensive agriculture. Its labour force is skilled, there is research and development potential and a good infrastructure.

Another significant asset of the region is the energy industry, which is one of its leading economic sectors. The Maritsa-Iztok energy complex is the second biggest energy generation centre in the Republic of Bulgaria (after the Kozloduy nuclear power plant), and it produces about 38% of the country's electricity.

Machine tool engineering, hydraulics, and robotic engineering are other industries of economic importance to Stara

Zagora region.

Future trends for regional development are related to the impact of restructuring the economy and the social infrastructure. The region has two large industrial centres in Stara Zagora and Kazanlak as well as a smaller industrial complex at Maglizh, all of which are significant in terms of national planning.

However, the process of restructuring has a number of unfavourable consequences, such as the termination of certain production lines, and companies are going into liquidation. All these lead to a drop in income from gainful employment and to a number of job losses. The smaller municipalities are hardest hit by these changes.

Environmental problems ensuing from



regions. The major sectors are coal mining, at the Maritsa-Iztok complex in the municipalities of Radnevo and Galabovo, and processing industries such as energy generation, and machine tool engineering. The main industrial centres are the cities of Stara Zagora, (machine tool engineering, chemical industry), Kazanlak (textiles), Galabovo (energy generation), and Chirpan (food and beverages production).

With arable land accounting for 41.4% of the region's area, and a good agro-climate and soil, agriculture is based on cereals and perennial crops (vines, orchards, oil and medical plants). Cotton and oil-bearing roses are specific crops grown in this region.

In terms of the characteristics of its labour market, Stara Zagora region stands out as particularly well off as the number employed per 1 000 inhabitants at 301 persons is substantially above the national average of 248. The unemployment level at 10.2% is also well below the national average. Industry is the major employer with 42%, a figure which is higher than in most other regions. In contrast, agriculture employs only 23% of all those in work.

The Thracian University and a division of the Institute of Space Research of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences are also situated in Stara Zagora.

Important transport routes here include the E773 and E85 A-Class roads and the Sofia-Varna, Sofia-Plovdiv-Burgas, and Ruse-Podkova railroads. Road density and telephone penetration are both close to the national average. With one medical doctor looking after 362 inhabitants as against 396 inhabitants nationally, and 11.1 hospital beds per 1 000 inhabitants, health-care provision is better than the national average.

Which regions are similar to Stara Zagora region?

Area:

5 147 km²

- Bari (I)
- Paijat-Hame (FIN)
- Olomoucky (CZ)

Population density:

75 inhabitants per km²

- Jihlavsky (CZ)
- Potsdam-Mittelmark (D)
- Trento (I)

Land use:

30 % forest

- Languedoc-Roussillon (F)
- Andalucia (E)
- Ustecky (CZ)

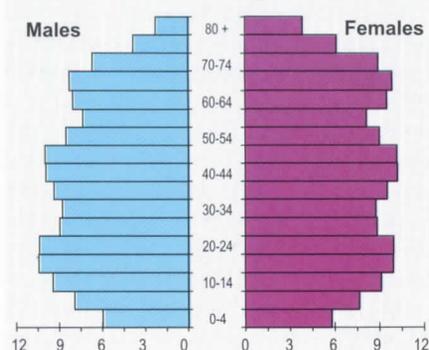
opencast coal mining mean that the region is one of the so-called "environmental hot spots" in the country.

One of Bulgaria's most developed regions

In addition to being a well-populated region, the demographic characteristics of Stara Zagora region indicate that it is one of only slightly negative natural growth, with both the share of under 25s and over 65s equal to the national average. Infant mortality, the birth and death rate are all around average.

Industry plays a leading role in the economy of Stara Zagora region, contributing 35.4% to the regional value added, which is one of the highest shares among the

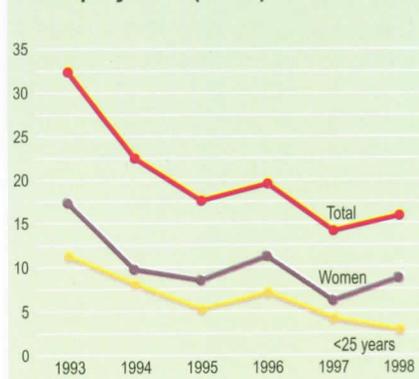
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	397,2
Births		24,7
Deaths		38,3
Migration		2,4
Population	31.12.98	386,0

Unemployment (1 000)





South-West region

The Balkan's natural geographic centre

In the past, the South-West region was a crossroad for various civilizations and races. The Thracian tribes "Serdj" and "Denteleni" inhabited this area, and established the settlements of Skaptopara and Serdika, which today are known as Blagoevgrad and Sofia respectively. Under Roman rule many administrative, military and trade centres were founded, the main ones being Serdika, Ulpia and Nikopolis ad Nestrum. The Bulgarian strongholds of Sredets and Krakra were important centres in the Middle Ages. During the Ottoman era many important roads crossed the valleys of the Struma, Mesta and Iskar rivers.

Administratively, the region is broken down into several sub-regions - Sofia (capital) region, Sofia region, Pernik, Kyustendil and Blagoevgrad. They have 52 municipalities and 956 settlements among them. The main centres are Sofia with 1 122 000 citizens, Pernik with 86 000, and Blagoevgrad with 73 000.

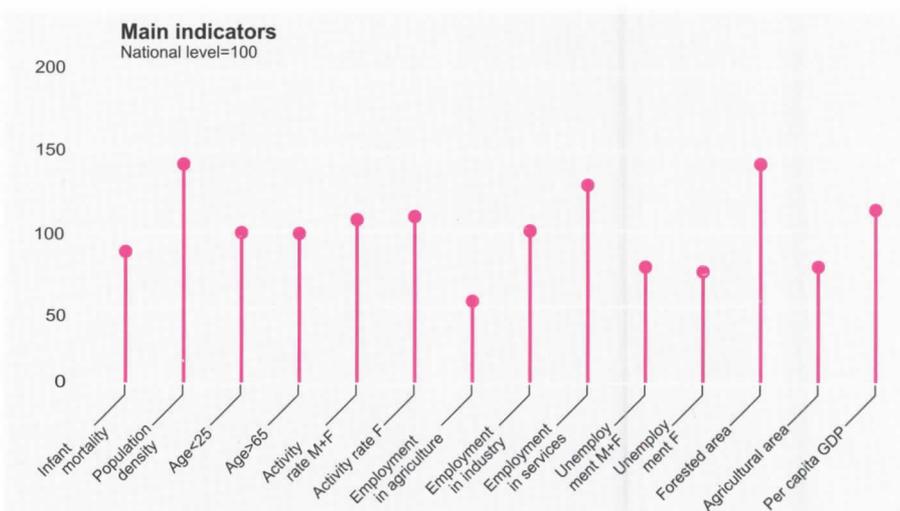
The region comprises the south-western parts of Bulgaria and a small part of north Bulgaria, namely the Botevgrad and Etropole regions. The northern border passes along the Balkan mountain ridge and the Iskar defile and reaches the Manaselska River. Other links to north Bulgaria are at Petrohan, Vitinya, and Arabakonak. The South-Central region borders the region to the east along the valley of the Mesta River. The region's southern border coincides with the state frontier with the Republic of Greece, where there is a road customs border at Kulata. The western border is 350 km long and forms the border with the Republic of Macedonia and with Yugoslavia.

The capital Sofia has a strong influence on the region's development, due mainly to its concentration of industrial capacity and high population density. However, these factors are both advantages and disadvantages for the South-West region's development.



South-West region possesses the most modern transport infrastructure in the country.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Location of European importance

The region's geographic location is of paramount importance for the development of a pan European transport infrastructure. The 4th, 8th and 10th European traffic corridors cross this area. Connections with neighbouring countries could be improved as there are a number of important border crossings, which are not fully exploited at present.

An abundance of natural resources is the region's second major asset. It is a key prerequisite for the development of fundamental economic activities, such as energy production, agriculture and tourism.

In general, the region possesses considerable general demographic and economic potential. It has spurred the

development of various capital and labour-intensive industries. Not surprisingly, this is the most attractive region in terms of investment opportunities.

One of the region's disadvantages is the high level of environmental pollution. The ecological balance is most disrupted in the industrial centres of Sofia, Pernik, Pirdop and Bobovdol. Furthermore, excessive industrial concentration in the towns of Sofia and Pernik has also contributed to the deterioration of the population's overall living conditions. The lack of forestry protection and the shortage of drinking water, especially in the Western Rhodopi, are also among the region's weaknesses. While the region faces high pollution lev-



Which regions are similar to South-West region?

Population density:
106 inhabitants per km²
Bretagne (F)
Luneburg (D)
Constanta (RO)

Land use:
43 % forest
Karlovarsky (CZ)
Franche-Comté (F)
Koblenz (D)

Employment structure:
30 % industry
Luneburg (D)
South Yorkshire (UK)
Kesk-Eesti (EE)

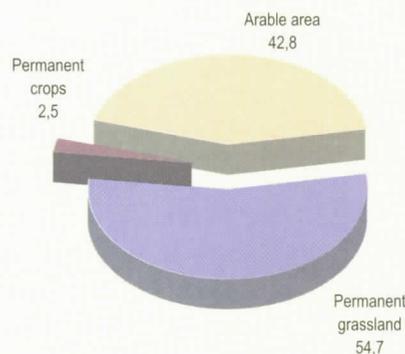
Agriculture - 1999

Number of private farms	338 224
Persons working in agriculture *	118 207
Total agricultural area (ha)	850 331
Total livestock	936 138
Sheep per 100 ha of total agricultural land	50,4
Pigs per 100 ha of total agricultural land	25,5
Cattle per 100 ha of total agricultural land	10,5
Main crops (1 000 tonnes)	
Wheat	168,0
Maize	51,0

* see explanatory notes

els in some of its parts, nature is well preserved, as is the case with the National Park on the Pirin mountain. In contrast to the high level of economic activity in the capital and its vicinity, the peripheral parts are still lagging behind in their economic development. The restructuring of the region's economy has led to an increase in the unemployment level in the main industrial centres, while in the region's southern parts the overall low level of employment is worrying.

Agricultural land use in 1999 (%)



	Area	Population			Activity	Unemployment	Employment		
	km ²	1000	Inhabitants /km ²	Change %	%	%	Agriculture %	Industry %	Services %
	1998	1998	1998	1995-1998	1998	1998	1998	1998	1998
South-West	20 276	2 142	106	-0,8	53,9	12	14	30	56
Sofia (capital)	1 345	1 200	892	0,6	54,6	9	3	26	71
Blagoevgrad	6 421	348	54	-1,0	57,6	17	32	33	35
Kyustendil	3 055	172	56	-3,2	51,6	17	26	39	35
Pernik	2 389	155	65	-2,8	48,6	13	25	42	32
Sofia	7 067	267	38	-3,9	50,4	13	31	35	34



Natural contrasts

Covering 20 276 km², or 18.3% of the country's area, the region is the second largest after the North-Central region. The greatest proportion of it belongs to Sofia region, covering 34.6%. Next comes Blagoevgrad oblast with 38.1%, followed by Kyustendil oblast at 15.2%. At only 1 345 km², the capital Sofia covers the smallest area.

The territory comprises various natural zones, ranging from basins and valleys to plains and gorges. A peculiarity of the relief is the closed shape of the basins, which accounts for their high level of pollution. Together they comprise 25% of the total area, the biggest being the Sofia and Samokov basins, where many settlements and major roads are situated. Overall, the relief is favourable for developing the tourist and wood processing industries, but hampers the transport infrastructure, especially for rail.

Much like the relief, the climate is varied, ranging from moderate in the southern parts to mountainous in the north. Average annual temperatures increase from north to south.

Water resources are estimated to be 6.3 billions m³, 63% of them on the surface. The majority of the water from the Struma, Mesta and Iskar rivers is used for irrigation, industrial purposes and household consumption. The artificial lakes of "Iskar" and "Studena" supply households with their water. There are also 365 natural mountain lakes in this region, which encourage tourist development and environmental protection. The large quantities of thermal and mineral water, pumped at Gorna Banya, Bankya and Sapareva Banya, have spurred the growth of several health resorts. Due to such substantial water resources, the majority of Bulgaria's hydroelectric plants have been built in this region.

Reflecting the mountainous relief, arable land accounts for only 18% of the total area, while forests cover around 40%. Many of the country's nature reserves and parks are situated here.

The abundance of ores and minerals has stimulated the development of the energy and metallurgy sectors. The main coal deposits are extracted at Bobovdol and Pernik, while black coal is mined at Kremikovtsi.

Main enterprises

Name	Activity
Ad Kremikovtsi	Manufacture of iron products
Ad Mini-Bobov Dol	Lignite mining
Ad Stomana	Manufacture of iron products
Ad Mini-Pernik	Lignite mining
Ad Farmatsiya Dupnitsa	Chemical manufacturer
Ad Elatsite - Med	Manufacture of metal products
Ad Mdk	Copper production
Ad Radomir Leyaro-Kovashki Kompleks	Machinery manufacturer
Ad Mina Pirin	Lignite mining
Ad Sofarma	Pharmaceutical products

Contrasts in demographic development

At the end of 1998, the region's population numbered 2 141 745, or 26% of the country's total, which is the highest share of all regions. This is also the most densely populated region (106 people per km²), with densities reaching as high as 892 people per km² in the city of Sofia, although dropping to as low as 10 people per km² in some villages in Sofia oblast. The share of the urban population at 80.6% is also the highest nationally. Overall, the regional demographic indicators are strongly influenced by the highly urbanised capital, Sofia. This to some extent blurs the real demographic situation in some peripheral areas. For example, one of the lowest birth rates nationally (6.4 per 1 000 inhabitants) was recorded in the region of Pernik, while the regional figure at 7.8 per 1 000 inhabitants is close to average.

In the period 1992-1998 the population decreased only slightly (-0.8 per 1 000 inhabitants), resulting in the lowest rate of population decline of all the regions. This relatively low decline is mainly due to the migratory flows from the rest of country to this region, and in particular to the capital. Compared to other regions, the mobility of the population is much lower, and mainly between the towns. Another factor for the relatively slight population decline is the low death rate at 13.2 per 1 000 inhabitants, coupled with an average birth rate (7.8 per 1 000 inhabitants).

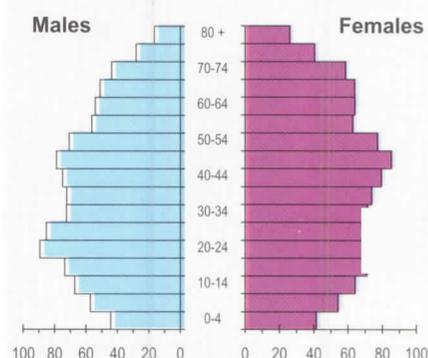
The age structure of the population reveals that the percentage of people under 25 is 30%, while the share of those aged 65 or higher is 15.3%. However, this positive overall trend is highly dependent on the strong demographic potential in the capital. In contrast, the demographic situation in Pernik and Kuystendil municipalities is

of particular concern, since the average age of the population is very high.

Furthermore, this ageing of the population has had a negative impact on the overall population fertility rate, resulting in a decrease in the birth rate and an increase in the death rate. Thanks to the well-developed health infrastructure in Sofia, infant mortality at 12.4 per 1 000 live births is below average.

The region holds the highest values in terms of life expectancy figures, 71.7 years compared to 71.0 nationally, although in some parts of the region the life expectancy values reach as low as 58.6 (Pernik) and 59.1 (Kyustendil).

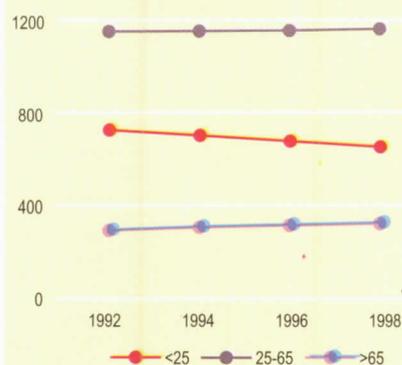
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



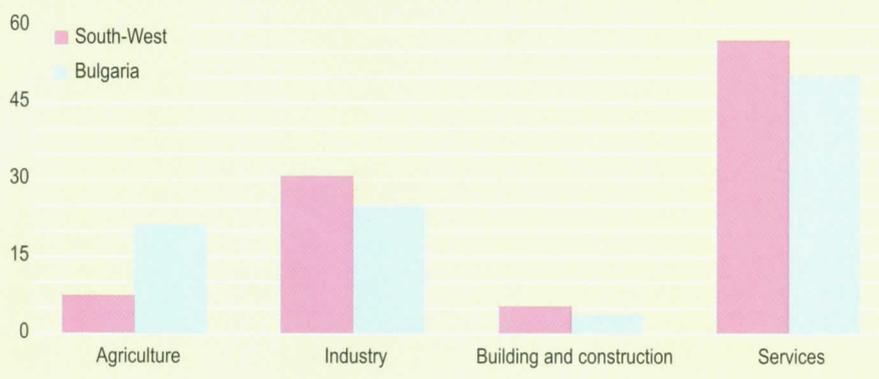
Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population 31.12.92	2175,6
Births	127,3
Deaths	190,1
Migration	28,9
Population 31.12.98	2141,7

Population by age-groups (1 000)



Gross value-added by sector - 1998 (%)



The most developed industrial region

In terms of its economic power, this is the most developed region, contributing 29.4% to the country's GDP; its per capita GDP is the highest among the regions. The region has the highest value added figures nationally in all branches except agriculture, which reflects the well-developed economic structure in the capital and its beneficial influence on the region's development. The share of both industry and services in the regional value added, amounting to more than 85%, is also an indicator of the high level of economic activity in the region.

With only 42% of the region's total area given over to agriculture, this is the lowest figure among the six planning regions. Moreover, the arable land tends to be steeply sloped, which hampers its cultivation and worsens the processes of erosion. Just under three-quarters of the arable area is covered by cornfields, while pastures account for 20.7% and are used for cattle breeding. Cereal crops account for 64% of all crop production. While the major crops are wheat, maize and oats, tobacco and

sunflowers are also grown.

Due mainly to the abundance of skilled labour and market availability, the industrial sector is more developed here than in any other region. The main industrial sectors are metallurgy, machine building, energy production, chemical and food industries. Two large enterprises, "Stomana" and "Kremikovtsi", play a leading role in the metallurgical industry, which contributes around 25% to total industrial production. The machine-building sector includes the production of transport and metal processing machines. The computer and electronic industry, mainly for home appliances, is also well developed. The chemical industry includes the manufacturing of perfumes, drugs, plastics and rubber. The food industry contributes almost 10% to total industrial production.

The region has the highest value added from the services sector of the six regions, with trade and transport the leading branches. Both natural sites and cultural attractions are traditionally actively exploited, and the main tourist

centres are located in Vitosha, Bansko, Sandanski, and Melnik.

As in the whole country, the transition period has led to a substantial decline in the region's industrial production and to the closure of major enterprises.

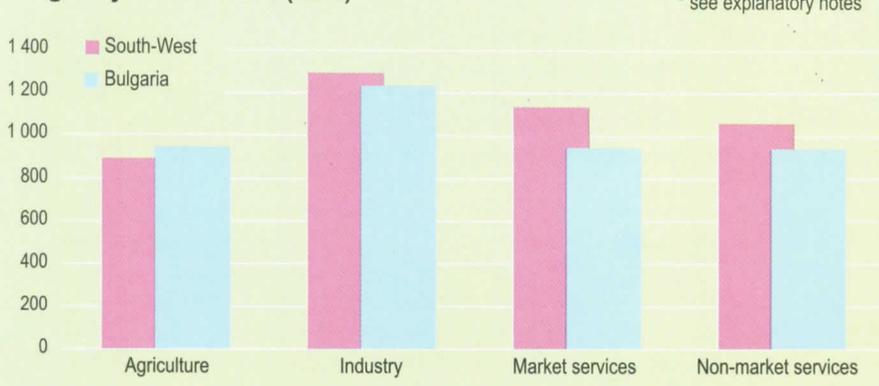
High wages in the capital

The severe economic crisis in the country that began in the early 1990s caused substantial fluctuations in real wages. They reached their lowest level in 1997, due to the effect of extremely high inflation rates. Since then wages have been steadily increasing in the region. The traditionally well-developed regional economy, boosted by the capital Sofia, has kept wages at a relatively high level, despite variations in rural areas.

The average annual wage at the end of 1998 was higher than in any other region, being 8% higher than the national average. The highest wages nationally were recorded in the market and non-market branches, where they were around 20% above average. In contrast, wages in agriculture were the second lowest in Bulgaria, due to the small share of this sector in the regional economy. The industrial sector enjoys higher than average wages, which are higher only in the South-East region.

As in the whole country, more than a half of household income comes from wages and salaries. However, as wages are higher here and more people are in employment, this share is larger than in the other regions. A specific feature of the region is the high share of additional income thanks to the large number of job opportunities, which results in some people having two jobs.

Wages by sector - 1998 (ECU) *

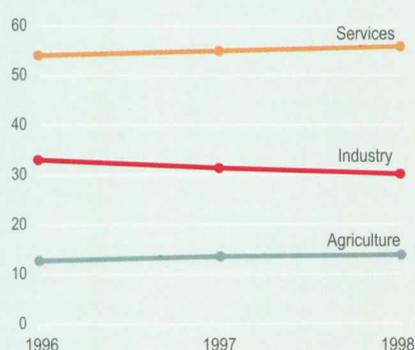




Low unemployment level

The activity rate at 53.9% is the highest nationally, being around 3.5% above the national average. Well over a quarter of all employees in the country work here, which is the highest figure among the six regions. The largest number employed is in the market services sector, followed by industry and the non-service sector branch. That the market services sector is the biggest employer and employs more people than in the other regions reveals the modern economic structure in the capital. A distinct feature of the regional economy is the low employment level in the agricultural sector, its share being the lowest of the six regions. However, the proportion of those employed in agriculture increased in the period 1996-1998. This could be attributed to the substantial decrease in employment in industry during the transition period and the consequent drop in overall employment figures, rather than to an increase in the number employed in agriculture. The largest decline in employment numbers is recorded in the building sector, which reflects a nationwide tendency. However, this trend is not a sustainable

Employment by sector (%)



Employment by age groups - 1998 (%)

	< 25 years	25-54 years	≥ 55 years
Men	9	81	10
Women	9	88	4
Total	9	84	7

one, but is due mainly to the temporary slump in the real estate market. In turn, this reflects the lack of income that can be devoted to buying real-estate property.

The unemployment level at 12.0% is the lowest of all the regions, the national average being 16.0%. The unemployment trend in the period 1993-98 dropped to around 4% below the national average, which can be explained by the large number of job opportunities in the capital and in the other major towns. In contrast to other regions, the majority of the vacant job positions are quickly filled. Many programmes are in place to help retrain the unemployed population.

The number of unemployed women is lower than the number of unemployed men, which is due to the peculiarities of the regional economic structure. Unemployment below the age of 25 decreased by around 14% in the period 1993-1998, reaching 29% at the end of 1998. It is the lowest rate among the six regions, being substantially lower than the national average of 36%. Although this rate has followed the overall national tendency, it has been highly influenced by the favourable employment opportunities in the capital. The long-term unemployment trend reached its peak of 66% in 1995, but fell to 53% in 1998, which is equal to the national average. Despite its average value, it is still a worrying indicator for the general employment situation both in the region and in the country. A specific problem here relates to the limited number of job offers in the regions of Blagoevgrad, Kuystendil, and Pernik.

Bulgaria's transport focal point

The development of the region's transport infrastructure depends on two main factors. Firstly, the region's geographic location is a central one in a European context. Secondly, the country's capital Sofia is at the heart of the region, which determines its leading role in the transport network. Nevertheless, further improvement in transport connections should be achieved after the completion of several projects related to the 4th and 8th European traffic corridors.

With the exception of water transport, all

Resident employment by sex (%)



Unemployment (1 000)



other modes of transport are developed. The leading role is played by road transport, and there are 6 877 km² of roads, accounting for 19% of Bulgaria's total road length. The road density at 339 km per 1 000 km² is close to the national average of 336 km per 1 000 km². The "Hemus" and "Trakia" highways cross this region, with a total length of 122 km. Other major roads are Sofia - Kulata, which is part of the 4th European traffic corridor, Kalotina - Sofia - Plovdiv, and Gyueshevo - Sofia, part of the 8th European corridor. Mountainous terrain hampers road connections between the capital and the settlements situated in the valley of the Mesta River.

Rail transport is also important to the region, and lines in all directions are electrified. Several international rail routes cross the region, including the Belgrade-Sofia-Plovdiv-Istanbul, the Sofia-Ruse-Bucharest-Moscow and the Sofia-Kulata-Athens railway. The Sofia-Kuystendil-Skopije railway is under construction and will soon be finished.

A definite regional advantage is the number of connections there are by air, as from the airport in the capital Sofia there are flights to the rest of the world and to the main cities in the country.

Communications - 1998

	South-West	Bulgaria
Length of road in km per km ²	0,31	0,31
Length of road in km per 1000 population	2,94	4,17
Telephone connections per 1000 population	449	387

Number of pupils - 1999

	Total
Pre-school	53 945
Primary	94 802
Lower secondary	93 355
Higher secondary (vocational/general)	95 408
Tertiary (higher education)	124 274
Total	461 784

Health care - 1998

	South-Central	Bulgaria
Hospitals	58	276
Doctors per 10 000 population	26,8	25,3
Hospital beds per 10 000 population	56,3	70,7

"Environmental hotspots"

Environmental pollution is one of the main regional problems. It has worsened gradually, due to the concentration of industrial enterprises and the high level of automobile fumes in the major regional towns. The Iskar River is one of the main sources of pollution in the region, while cross-border pollution is negligible. The main sources of pollution are the extraction of metal ores in the Sofia plain, and of brown coal in the Pernik and Bobovdol basins. The state of the environment is monitored by the Ministry of the Environment, and several other regional inspectorates in the towns of Sofia, Pernik and Blagoevgrad. The treatment of different types of waste is among the more serious problems for the region. However, the forthcoming construction of several enterprises for waste treatment in the town of Sofia and in some other regional towns should start to tackle this problem.

A shortage of water can cause problems at certain times of the year. Due to the measures taken by the responsible ministries, this problem has to some extent been resolved. Water consump-

tion is the highest among the six regions. All settlements in the region have access to electricity, while the majority of industrial enterprises are supplied with gas via the national pipeline.

The region has a well-developed telecommunications network, with 18.5% of the post offices and 30% of the telephone lines in the country situated here.

Bulgaria's cultural centre

Numerous cultural landmarks are situated in the South-West region. The cultural monuments reflect the region's development in different periods, ranging from the Byzantine era, through to the First Bulgarian kingdom and to modern times. The strong influence of European culture is most tangible in the capital Sofia.

The overall enrolment rate at 85% is the highest nationally, which stands for a high level of literacy of the population. This could be attributed mainly to the strong educational infrastructure in the capital, Sofia. The educational infras-

tructure includes 22 universities and 13 colleges, with a total of 122 000 pupils and 13 200 teachers. The oldest university in the country, "St. Kliment Ohridski" University is sited in the capital, Sofia. It has a long academic tradition, and offers one of the best educations in the country.

The recently established American University in Blagoevgrad is quite unique to the area. Founded only 10 years ago, it offers a high quality liberal arts education in various subjects. Undoubtedly, its international student body and strong curriculum place it among the major academic centres in the Balkans.

The health care sector is more developed here than in any other region, with more than a fifth of all hospital beds and pharmacies in the country sited here. 17 theatres, 40 cinemas, 57 museums and over 1 650 libraries meet the region's cultural needs. The Pirin and Vitosha parks, which are part of the country's natural wealth, are sited in this region. The most famous landmark is the Rila monastery, being both a tourist attraction and a monument to a long established cultural tradition.



Blagoevgrad

The south-western corner of Bulgaria

With the city of Blagoevgrad as its administrative centre, the region is situated in the south-western corner of the Republic of Bulgaria. In addition to internal borders with the regions of Kyustendil, Pazardzhik and Smolyan, it is bounded by part of the state frontier with the Republic of Greece to the south, and the state frontier with Macedonia to the west.

By 1998, the population was 348 000 people or 4.2% of the national total. Blagoevgrad region is one of the country's well-populated regions, covering an area of 6 421 km² or 5.8% of the national total and making it the third largest region after Burgas region and Sofia region. That there are three of Bulgaria's busiest border-crossing points within its area, one with Greece and two with Macedonia, indicates its importance for cross-border trade. In terms of administrative set-up, the region comprises 14 municipalities.

The region extends across the entire Mount Pirin area, parts of the Western Rhodopi, Mount Rila, the Belasitsa and Slavyanka mountains, as well as parts of the mountains along the western frontier. Numerous valleys lie in between. The climate is very diverse, from transitional-continental to transitional-Mediterranean in the south. The major rivers in the region are the Struma and Mesta and their tributaries. The soil cover ranges from forest soil in the mountain areas to alluvial soils in the river valleys.

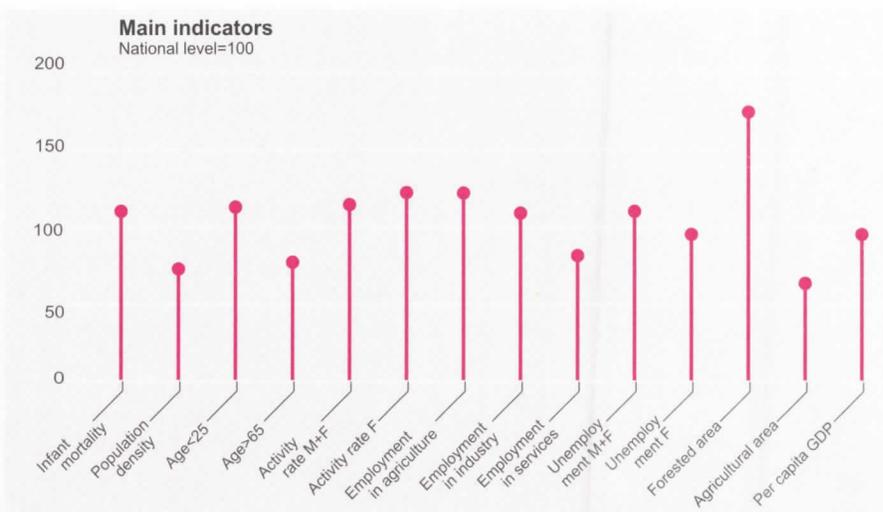
Water is an important resource for this area, with numerous lakes on Mount Pirin, as well as thermal mineral springs in Sandanski, Marikostino and Ognyanovo. While raw mineral resources are noted for their diversity (antimony, molybdenum, iron ore, coal, feldspar, and marble), only coal and marble are of economic significance.

The historical heritage goes back to the traces left behind by the Thracians, the Romans (ruins of the ancient Roman city Nikopolis ad Nestum), and the Greeks, although the historical landmarks from the Middle Ages are the most numerous. The Renaissance Period is preserved at Melnik, Bansko, Kovachevitsa and Dolen.



A fast-growing tourist centre, Bansko attracts tourists with its beautiful scenery.

Photo by Peter Dimov



Advantageous geographic location for cross-border co-operation

A more effective use of the available resources should help future developments of the region's economy, society and infrastructure. Its advantageous location geographically and for transport purposes should provide a further impetus for this development. Alternative forms of tourism and cross border co-operation rank among the main objectives of future development. That Mount Pirin, which includes the Pirin National Park, known as one of the most beautiful mountain areas in Europe, has now been included in UNESCO's list of world natural and cultural heritage sites should boost tourism to the region. The main forms of tourism in the area are skiing (Bansko), tourism

based around spa resorts, and cultural tours.

The major development problems of Blagoevgrad region are related to the unfavourable trends in its demographic and economic state. The diminishing birth rate and the processes of an aging population are among the most acute problems. The opportunities for technological and product-line restructuring of the industrial sector are not very large. The limited amount of capital being invested here is a retarding factor. The transport infrastructure is distributed unevenly throughout the region's territory. Furthermore, it is not sufficiently developed to meet the intense traffic from and to the countries bordering the



Which regions are similar to Blagoevgrad region?

Area:
6 421 km²
Dumfries and Galloway (UK)
Pest (HU)
Uusimaa (FIN)

Employment structure:
32 % agriculture
Siauliai (LT)
Podlaskie (PL)
Thessalia (EL)

Age structure:
35 % under 25
Puglia (I)
Haute-Normandie (F)
Kurzeme (LT)

region. These two factors hamper the optimal use of the region's geographic location. Part of these problems will be resolved with the expansion of cross-border co-operation with Greece and Macedonia.

Strong industrial sector

In terms of its demographic characteristics, Blagoevgrad region resembles its neighbouring regions. The population is concentrated mainly in the valleys and for that reason the population density at 54 inhabitants per km² is below the national average, while the urban population accounts for 55.8% of the total. The cities of Blagoevgrad, Petrich, Sandanski, Gotse Delchev and Razlog are the most populated of the region's

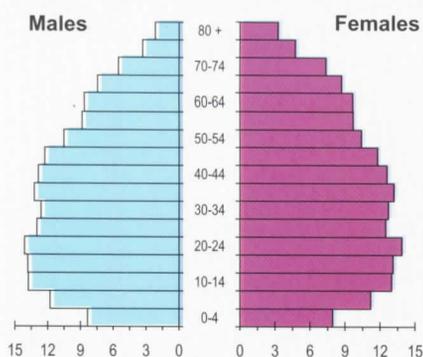
settlements. The south-western parts are inhabited by Bulgarian-Moslems whose occupation is predominantly in the field of agriculture (tobacco-growing).

Although less acute than the national picture, the trend is nevertheless towards declining birth rates and an aging population. Infant mortality at 16 per 1 000 live births is higher than the national average of 14.4. The number of those employed per 1 000 inhabitants is 219, while the unemployment level at 17.4% is higher than the national average. Industry has a leading place in the economic structure of the region. It produces 59.6% of the total revenue from gainful employment. It employs 33% of the total number of those employed. The leading industrial sectors are machine tools engineering and metal processing, electronics, food and beverages production, textile industry, and woodworking. The timber industry is at Yakoruda, Belitsa, and Bansko, coal mining at Simitli and marble extraction at Sandanski and Strumyani.

Arable land covers only 12.8% of the region, and vegetables, tobacco and vines are the major branches of agricultural production.

Infrastructure indicators are below average, with average road density at 0.27 km per km², and telephone penetration at 292 per 1 000 inhabitants. The region is crossed by a section of the E79 highway (Sofia-Blagoevgrad-Kulata) and sections of the Sofia-Kulata and Septemvri-Dobrinitsa railroads. Two universities, a regional hospital, and numerous schools are situated in Blagoevgrad town. While the indicators for patients per doctor and hospital beds per 1 000 inhabitants are both below average, these services are better developed in the region's larger towns.

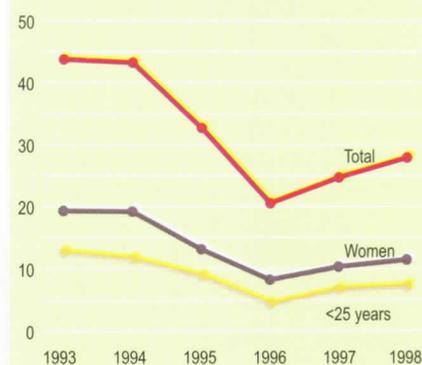
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	351,8
Births		25,1
Deaths		24,4
Migration		-4,5
Population	31.12.98	347,9

Unemployment (1 000)





Kyustendil

Border region with diverse nature

Situated in south-western Bulgaria, the region has the city of Kyustendil as its administrative centre and covers an area of 3 055 km² (2.7% of the national total). It borders the regions of Pernik, Sofia and Blagoevgrad, while to south-west it shares a frontier with the Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia) and with Macedonia. Within the region, there are 9 municipalities, 7 cities and 175 settlements. The region's 173 000 inhabitants (1998) represent 2.1% of the national total, making it one of the smaller regions by size of population. The population density at 56 inhabitants per km² is well below the national average, while the urban population accounts for 64.4% of the total (also below the national average).

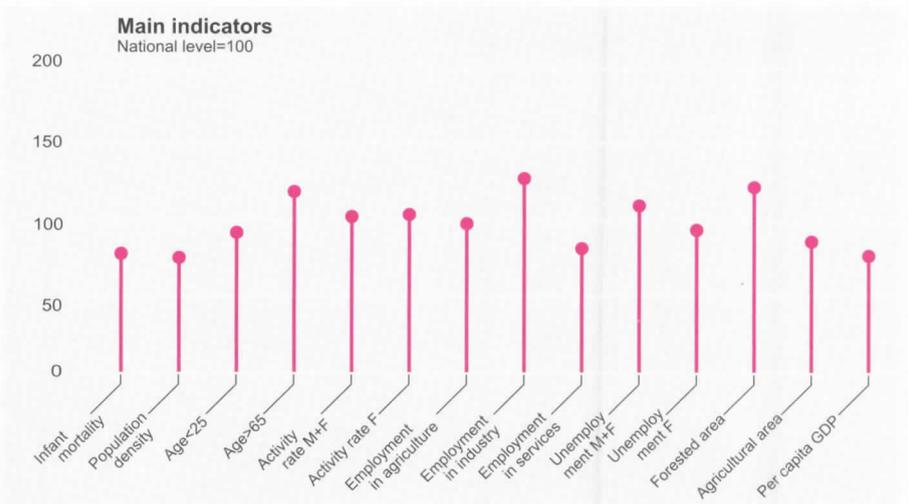
Thracian tribes, who were conquered by the Romans after the 1st century A.D., were the first inhabitants of this area. Attracted by the convenient crossroads location and the availability of mineral springs, the Romans founded a settlement under the name of Pautaiia. During the period of Ottoman rule, Kyustendil and its surrounding area was an important trade and manufacturing centre.

The relief is characterised by great diversity. The region extends as far as the border mountains of Osogovo and Vlahina, and to parts of the Rila, Verila, Konyavska and Zemenska mountains. Numerous valleys are situated in-between, the most important ones being the Kyustendil Valley and Dupnitsa Valley. The major rivers running through the area are the river Struma and its tributaries: Treklyanska, Dragovishtitsa, Bistritsa, Rilska, Dzhermen. There are glacier lakes on Mount Rila.

Mineral resources in the region comprise brown and lignite coal, marble, dolomite and mixed ores.



The region's natural beauty is displayed in masterpieces by one of Bulgaria's greatest painters, Vladimir Dimitrov - *Maystora*. Photo by Peter Dimov



Historic sites to attract tourism

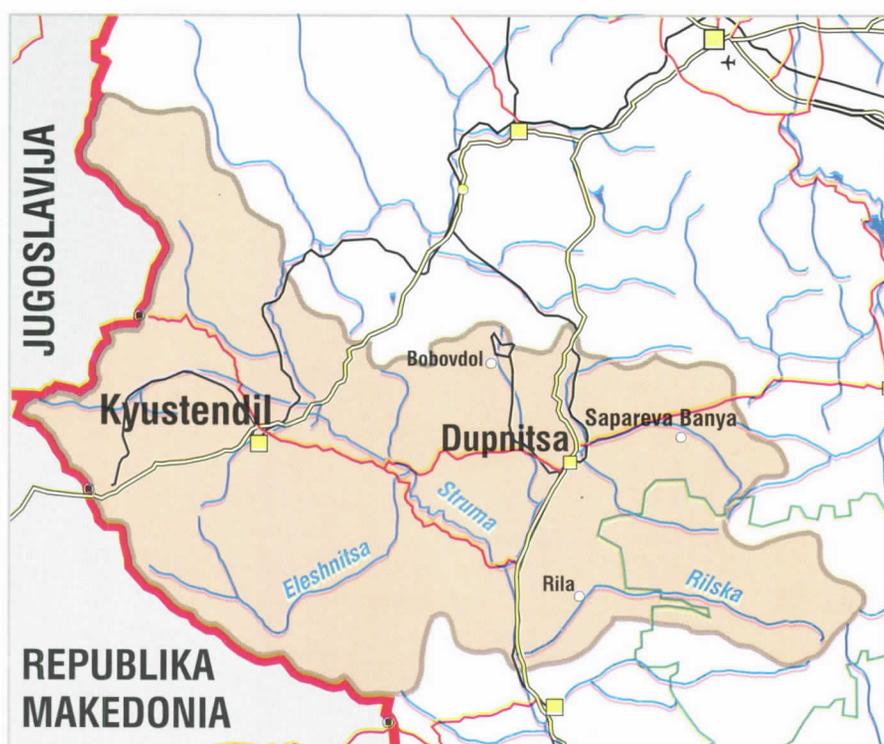
Kyustendil region is noted for landmarks which are deemed to be part of the world's heritage. The principal cultural and historical site is the famous Rila Monastery, which is included in UNESCO's list of protected sites. Other protected sites are the seven Rila Lakes, and the Stob Pyramids. The central part of the city of Kyustendil has been declared a site of architectural and archaeological interest.

Adding to the natural wealth of the region are its healthy mineral springs. The most renowned of them is the one at Sapareva Banya, which is the hottest in Bulgaria with a water temperature of 102°C and is exploited for spa treat-

ments. Overall, the region's natural wealth and the abundance of cultural landmarks should encourage future developments of the tourist industry.

Cross-border co-operation should provide ample opportunities for future development, as should the region's advantageous transport and geographic location and its favourable climate for agriculture.

One of the major regional problems is its worsening age structure. The share of the population under 25 (28%) is one of the lowest nationally, and is coupled with a high proportion of the population above 65 years (19%). A further negative factor which contributes to the decrease



Which regions are similar to Kyustendil region?

Land use:

- 37 % forest
- Sibiu (RO)
- Oberösterreich (A)
- Lorraine (F)

Population:

- 172 000 inhabitants
- Regensburg, Landkreis (D)
- Etela-Savo (FIN)
- Soignies (B)

Population density:

- 56 inhabitants per km²
- Ringkobing amt (DK)
- Ostliche Obersteiermark (A)
- Somogy (HU)

in the population is the high death rate (16.1 per 1 000 inhabitants) which is far above the low birth rate (6.7).

Although the region is renowned for its well preserved nature, there are some specific environmental problems. The major one is related to the coal mining industry in the municipality of Bobov Dol, which causes substantial damage to the environment.

Other regional problems are the high proportion of the population subject to water rationing, around 45%, and the high unemployment rate, which is one of the highest within the South-West region.

Industry, energy generation, agriculture

Although, as noted above, the demographic indicators are not positive, infant mortality at 11 per 1 000 live births is nevertheless below the national average of 14.4.

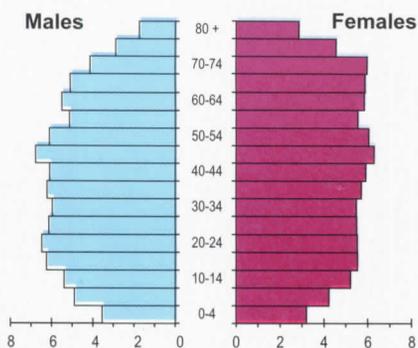
The active population, which has been declining since 1993, accounts for 51.1% of the inhabitants above 16 years of age. Moreover, the inhabitants of the region account for only 2.3% of the total number of those employed nationwide, while the unemployment level is slightly higher than the national average.

The region features an industrial-agrarian economy. The energy sector is represented by the Bobovdol Thermal Power Plant which runs on locally produced coal. The major industrial sectors, besides energy generation and coal mining, are the pharmaceutical and timber industry and woodworking. Arable land accounts for 19.5% of the area, with one-third of it being irrigated. The major branches of agricultural production are fruit and tobacco growing, and viticulture. Small quantities of cereals are grown as well. Stock-breeding covers all types of animals, involving broad use of mountain pastures.

With 1 216 km of roads here, giving a density of 0.4 km per km², the region exceeds the national average. The major routes traversing the region are the international E79 highway Sofia-Kulata-Thessaloniki (part of European Corridor No.4) and Sofia-Kyustendil-Gyueshevo-Skopije (part of European corridor No.8). The Sofia-Dupnitsa-Kulata-Thessaloniki and Sofia-Kyustendil-Gyueshevo railroads also cross the region, and there are plans to extend the railroad from Gyueshevo via Kumanovo to Skopije (Macedonia).

In the regional centre of Kyustendil there is archaeological museum, an art gallery and a theatre.

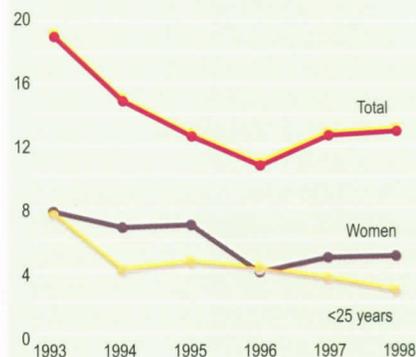
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	181,3
Births		9,8
Deaths		19,7
Migration		0,6
Population	31.12.98	171,9

Unemployment (1 000)





Pernik

The oldest coal mining region in Bulgaria

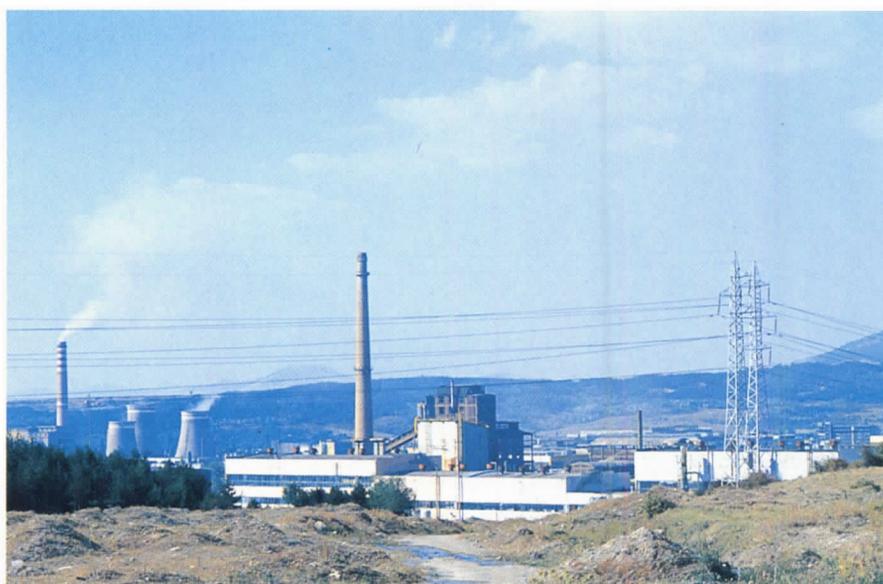
Situated in south-western Bulgaria, Pernik region has an area of 2 239 km² (2.2% of the national territory). The region borders Sofia, Sofia (capital) and Kyustendil regions, while to the west its boundary overlaps with the state frontier of the Republic of Yugoslavia. It consists of 6 municipalities, comprising 177 settlements including 6 cities, and has the city of Pernik as its administrative centre.

The population of the region amounts to 155 000 inhabitants (1998) or 1.9% of the national total. Thus in terms of population size, the region is one of Bulgaria's smaller regions. The average population density is 65 inhabitants per km², which is below the national average.

Pernik region has a varied relief, extending over parts of Kraishteto, the Pernik, Radomir, Breznik and Znepole Valleys and the surrounding mountains at Vitosha, Lyulin, Zavalaska and Konyavska.

The region has a rich historical past. Pernik itself emerged in the 10th century A.D. as an important fortress, later to be defended by Krakra Voivode.

The climate is moderately continental with pronounced temperature inversions in the valleys. The major rivers are the Struma and Erma. The explored deposits of the region include brown coal, the mining of which began at the end of the 19th century, limestone, dolomite, gold, fire clay, and barite. There are mineral springs in Breznik, Rudartsi and elsewhere.



For many years the Stomana metallurgical plant has been the major factor behind Pernik's economic development.
Photo by Peter Dimov



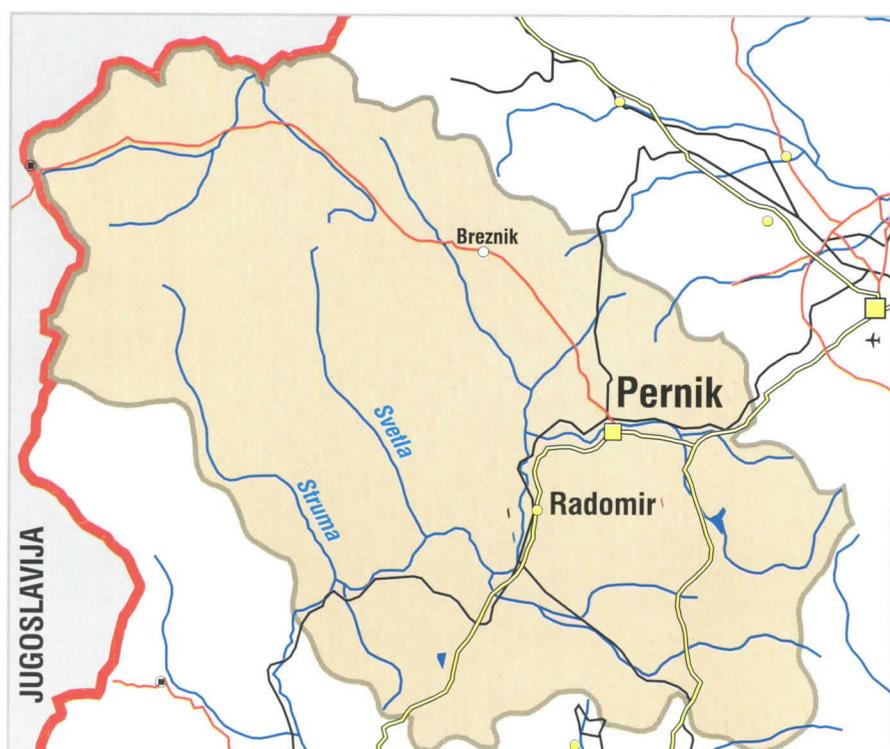
Openings for foreign investment

Pernik region benefits from its proximity to the capital, with easy access to its markets and cultural attractions. The energy sector offers the necessary facilities for the development of heavy industry, while a skilled labour force is on hand for employment.

There are numerous natural sites to encourage the development of tourism, including the Zhdreloto Gorge on the river Erma, as well as the mineral springs and spa cures at Rudartsi and at Breznik. Furthermore, cross-border cooperation and international transit traffic should help boost the local economy, and at the same time make it more attractive to foreign investors.

However, as a consequence of the ongoing restructuring in industry and

agriculture, some negative developments have been noted. There has been an increase in the level of unemployment, the closure of expensive long-term material assets (such as the Radomir Works for heavy machine tool engineering) as well as inadequate utilisation of the available mineral waters. An increase in the concentration of the population in the cities has had a corresponding effect of depopulating the rest of the area. Environmental problems in connection with coal mining, especially in the case of open-cast coal mines, requires investment in cleaning up these areas.



Which regions are similar to Pernik region?

Age structure:

28 % under 25
 Magdeburg (D)
 Aragon (E)
 Obalno-kraska (SI)

Land use:

51 % agriculture
 Arges (RO)
 Piemonte (I)
 Aragon (E)

Employment structure:

42 % industry
 Oberfranken (D)
 Gyor-Moson-Sopron (HU)
 Piemonte (I)

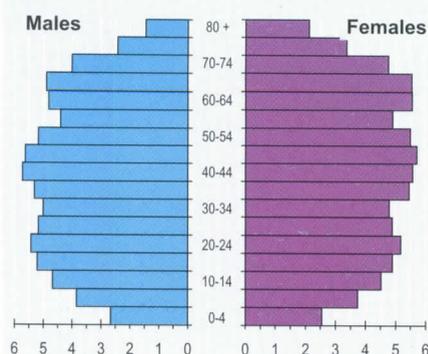
Coal-mining, energy generation and ferrous metallurgy

Demographic data reveal that the birth rate at 6.4 per 1 000 inhabitants is below average, while the death rate at 16.3 per 1 000 inhabitants is above the national average. As a result of this situation, the natural population growth is below the national average. Infant mortality is 14 per 1 000 live births. The urban population accounts for 74.6% of the total and is therefore above the national average. The relative share of the active population among the number of inhabitants above 16 years of age is 48.6% and is following a downward trend. The number employed in the region accounts for 2% of the total number of those employed nationally and the unemployment level at

13.3% is below the national average. Pernik region's well developed industrial structure includes ferrous metallurgy, machine tool engineering and metal processing, cement production, glass industry, food and beverages production, and clothing industry. In addition to coal mining, energy is also produced in thermal power plants.

Agriculture is less developed. Arable land accounts for 28.8% of the area, 14% being irrigated. Cereals are grown mainly in the valleys. Fruit and hop growing and is also widespread. Stockbreeding is less developed, despite the abundance of pasture land. The region's 1 069 km of roads result in a higher than average road density of 0.45 km per km². The international Sofia-Pernik-Kulata-Thessaloniki highway (part of the Trans-European transport corridor No.4) crosses the region, as does a section of the Sofia-Pernik-Kyustendil-Gyueshevo-Skopije highway (part of the Trans-European transport corridor No.8). The Sofia-Kulata-Thessaloniki and Sofia-Gyueshevo railroads also cut through the region, with prospects for the latter to be extended and linked to the railway network of Macedonia.

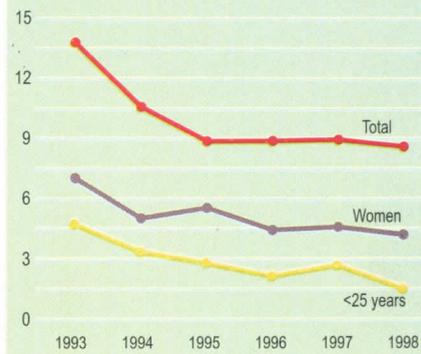
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population 31.12.92	163,3
Births	7,9
Deaths	17,2
Migration	0,9
Population 31.12.98	154,8

Unemployment (1 000)





Sofia

Surrounding its administrative centre

Sofia region is the sole region in the country whose administrative centre is situated outside its area - in the city of Sofia. The region is situated in the south-eastern part of Bulgaria. It borders the municipalities of Montana, Vratsa, Kyustendil, Pernik, Plovdiv, Pazardzhik and Sofia (capital) Region. To the west its boundary overlaps with part of the state frontier with Yugoslavia. It is the second largest region in Bulgaria after Burgas, comprising 22 municipalities within which there are 284 settlements, including 17 cities. The population is 267 000 inhabitants (1998) or 3.3% of the national total. Population density at 38.8 inhabitants per km² is only half the national average, despite the proximity of Sofia City. Over half the population live in the towns of Samokov, Botevgrad, Ihtiman, and Kostinbrod.

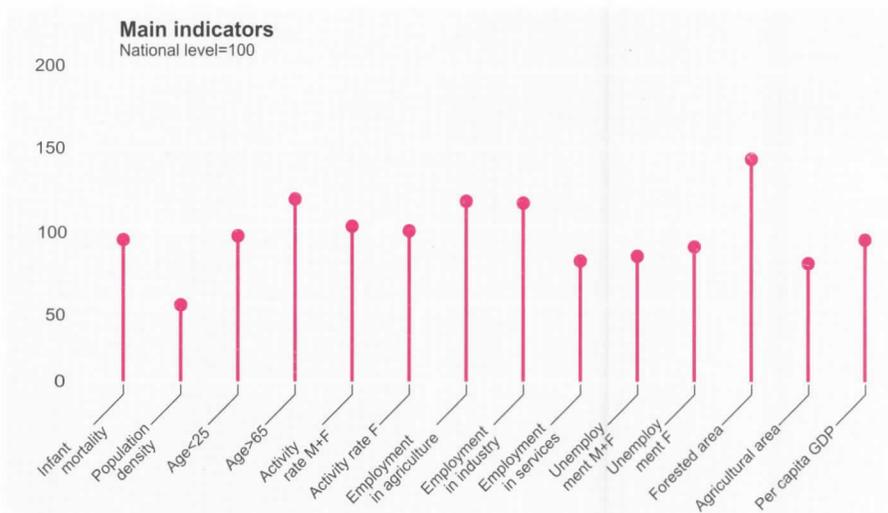
Remains of mediaeval fortresses (Urvich) and ancient human settlements are evidence of the rich historical past of the area covered by the present-day Sofia region.

Sofia region's geography is quite diverse. It extends over parts of the Western Balkan mountain range, Mount Rila and Sredna Gora, the Sofia plain and hinter-Balkan valleys. The explored deposits of mineral resources comprise coal (anthracite and lignite), non-ferrous metals (copper ore), and limestone.

The climate is characterised by cold winters and hot summers with some hints of a mountainous climate in the highlands. The precipitation rate is above the national average. The region is traversed by the rivers Iskar, Maritsa, Topolnitsa, Nishava and many of their smaller tributaries. Mineral springs occur at several locations - in Kyustendil, Dolna Banya, and Belchin. Soil types are quite diverse, while vegetation includes deciduous and high-quality coniferous forests of considerable economic significance.



The Iskar artificial lake is the biggest in Bulgaria, satisfying the needs of both the population and industry in the region.
Photo by Peter Dimov

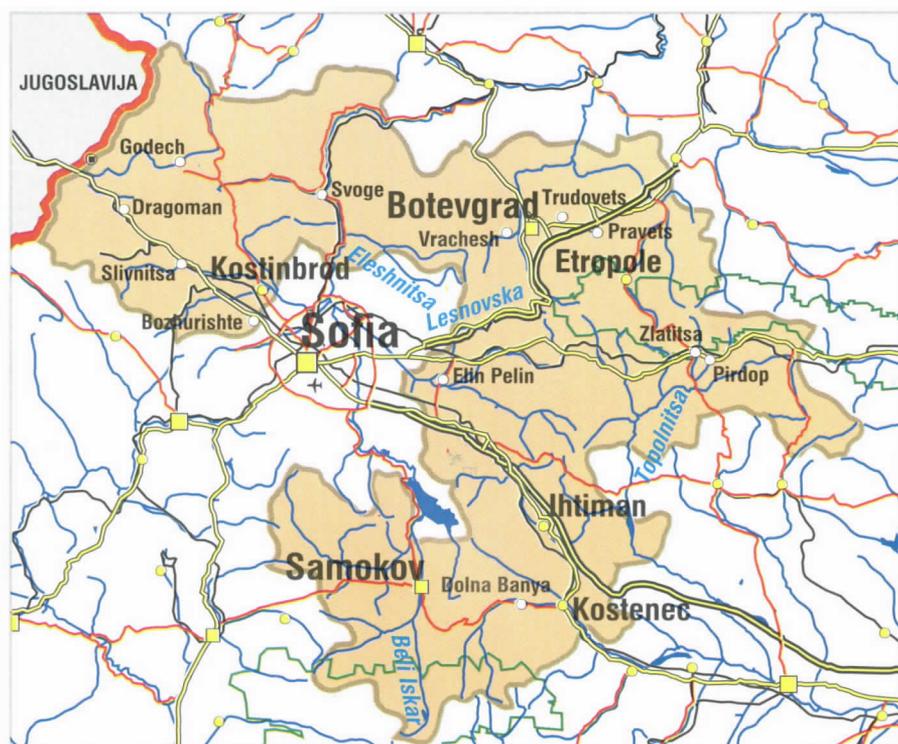


Overshadowed by capital city

Sofia region is in a most unusual position in that its infrastructure, social and economic development is influenced to a great extent by the multiple functions of Sofia city, which is not even within the boundaries of the region itself. Otherwise, the problems related to the development of Sofia region are similar to those of neighbouring regions. The unemployment level is particularly high among the gypsy population in the municipalities of Samokov and Ihtiman, while in the region's western areas there are serious problems in terms of its demographic structure.

The economic structure of the majority of the smaller municipalities is single sector, with the services branch contributing almost half to the regional value added.

However, Sofia region benefits from an advantageous transport network and geographic location. It is traversed by important transport arteries, and one of the country's busiest border-crossing points (Kalotina) on the international London-Calcutta highway is situated here.



Which regions are similar to Sofia region?

Population:

- 267 000 inhabitants
- Pistoia (I)
- Wiesbaden, Kreisfreie Stadt (D)
- Vas (HU)

Employment structure:

- 31 % agriculture
- Podkarpackie (PL)
- Utena (LT)
- Kriti (EL)

Population density:

- 38 inhabitants per km²
- Bastogne (B)
- Lugo (E)
- Alytus (LT)

Sound infrastructure

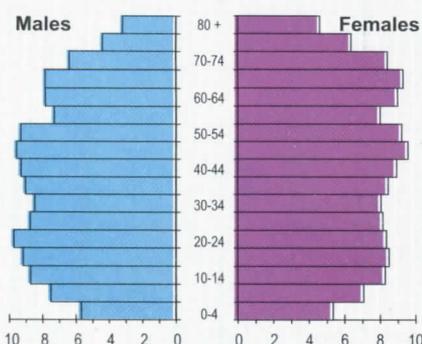
The natural population growth is negative and the age structure of the population is in the process of deteriorating. Infant mortality at 13 per 1 000 live births is below average.

The region's economy is a mixed industrial-agrarian one. Industry is represented by enterprises in the mining and processing sectors. Ore mining, timber processing, the extraction of building materials, food and beverages production and the chemical industry are all based here. Industry provides 31.1% in the regional value added, and employs 35% of all those in work here. Some of the larger industrial centres are the cities of Samokov, Botevgrad, Ihtiman and Svoge.

The agrarian sector fulfils a secondary function. Arable land accounts for only 17.2% of the region's area. Cereals, potatoes, fruits, and end of season vegetables are grown here. Tourism is based around local attractions such as the famous mountain resort at Borovets. The unemployment level is below the national average. The number of employed persons per 1 000 inhabitants is 220 people and therefore below the national average of 249 people. Those employed in the region account for 2.9% of the total number of those employed nationally.

Important roads in the region include the Hemus and Trakia highways, and road density here is above average at 0.40 km per km². Telephone penetration at 407 telephones per 1 000 inhabitants is also above average. The region's social infrastructure includes a broad network of schools, health care establishments, cultural and recreation facilities and museums. One medical doctor caters for 306 inhabitants or less than the national average of 396 people. The number of hospital beds provided per 1 000 inhabitants is 7.8, which is slightly above the national average of 7.1.

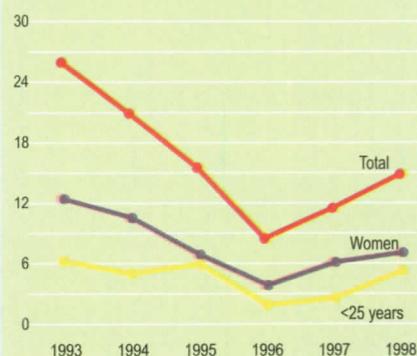
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	289,7
Births		16,9
Deaths		30,3
Migration		-8,9
Population	31.12.98	267,4

Unemployment (1 000)





Sofia (capital)

The metropolitan region

Sofia (capital) region was set up to accommodate the diverse functions of the capital city of Sofia. Situated in the central part of West Bulgaria, it is an enclave within Sofia region.

The administrative boundaries of Sofia (capital) region go beyond the territorial scope of the city of Sofia itself. It covers an area of 1 326 km², or 1.2% of the national territory, making it the smallest by area of all regions, although by population it is the largest, with 1.2 million inhabitants or 14.4% of the Bulgarian population. Sofia (capital) region has the status of a municipality and is divided into 24 districts, with 38 settlements, including 4 cities - Sofia, Bankya, Buhovo and Novi Iskar. Population density at 900 inhabitants per km² is also the highest. 54.6% of the population are active. The birth rate at 7.8 per 1 000 inhabitants is almost equal to the national average, while the death rate at 12.5 per 1 000 inhabitants is below average as is infant mortality at 11.1 per 1 000 live births as against 14.4 nationally.

Geographical variation is limited by the region's small size. Local coal and iron ore deposits are no longer economically significant. The climate is mainly moderately continental, but mountainous in the high areas. There are mineral springs at several locations, Bankya, Ovcha Kupel, Knyazhevo and Pancharevo. Alluvial soils dominate.

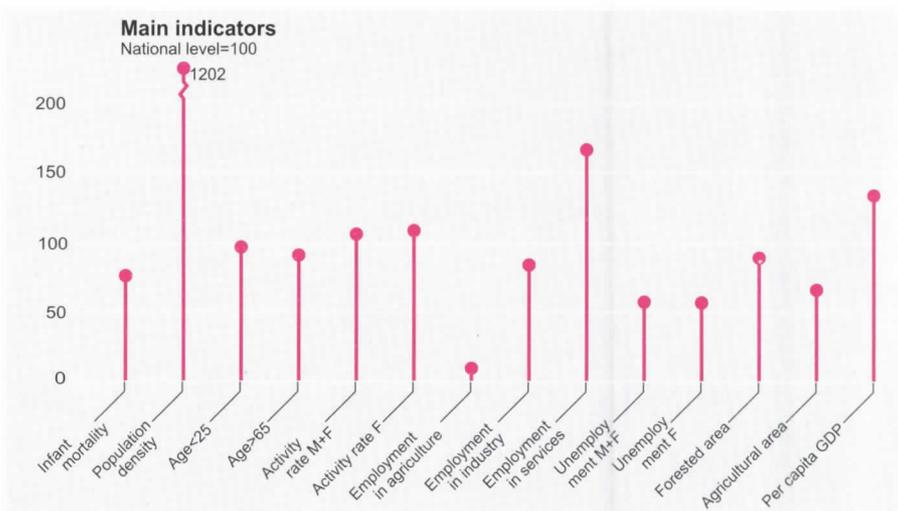
The capital city, which acts as the administrative centre of Sofia (capital) region, determines its transport and geographic significance as well. It is Bulgaria's biggest transport junction and the hub of most of its roads and railways.

A settlement has existed on the site of the present-day capital for centuries. There is evidence from historical data which suggests that it was founded by the Thracian tribe, the Serds, in the 8th-7th century B.C., from which its Roman name of Serdika stems. Later the Slavs renamed it Triaditsa, and then it evolved as a feudal town under the name of Sredets. Sofia was declared the capital of the Bulgarian state in 1879.



A major academic centre, Sofia University is the oldest academic institution in the country.

Photo by Peter Dimov



High concentration of activities

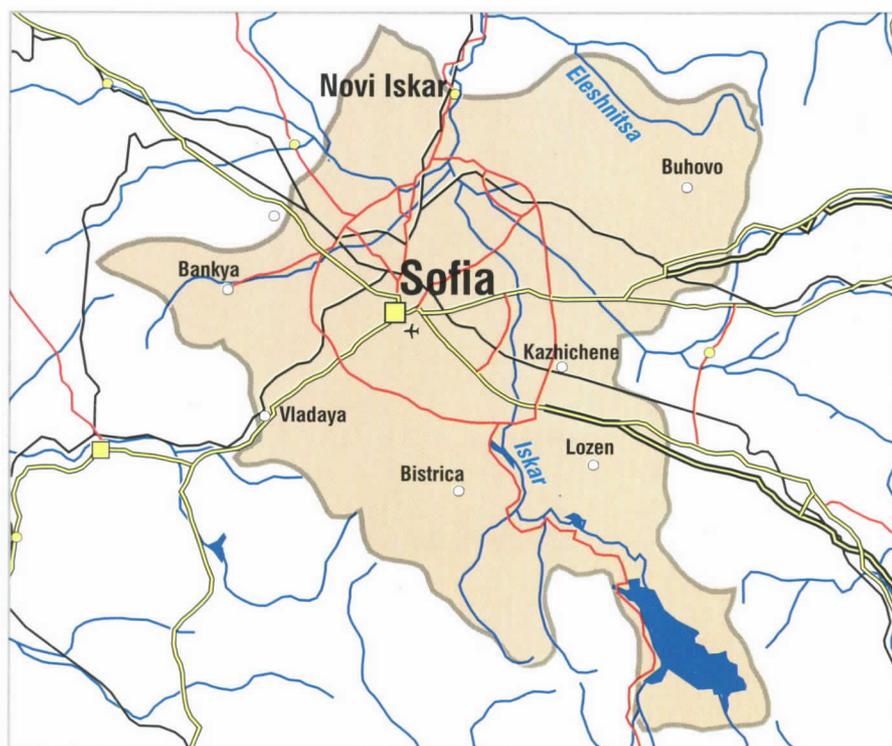
The major asset for the capital city's strong economic growth is the well-educated and highly skilled labour force. In turn, this is reflected in its low unemployment level and high activity rate. Furthermore, Sofia city is Bulgaria's main academic centre, with the majority of the country's universities situated here. Also advantageous is the age structure of the population. The share of the population under 25 is 30%, while the proportion of those aged 65 or more is 15%. In addition, Sofia city has one of the country's highest life expectancy figures, reaching 71.7 years.

However, a number of problem areas exist. One is the absence of a clear-cut and consistently implemented policy of active promotion of business in a cli-

mate which fosters entrepreneurship. Another is the depopulation of some settlements beyond the boundaries of the capital city, which is due to migration to the capital in the search of employment and a better quality of services.

Making Sofia one of the most important transport and economic centres in the Balkans is one of the urgent tasks of the region as a means to promote its social and economic development.

The region faces a number of environmental problems related to air pollution from road traffic and certain manufacturing facilities. The expansion of the underground network and greater use of lead-free petrol will contribute to the reduction of air pollution from the transport sector.



Which regions are similar to Sofia (capital) region?

Population:

1 200 000 inhabitants
 Praha (CZ)
 Malaga (E)
 Grande Porto (P)

Age structure:

15 % over 65
 Balears (E)
 Stockholm (S)
 Spodnjeposavska (SI)

Land use:

37 % agriculture
 Cataluna (E)
 Zilinsky (SK)
 Flevoland (NL)

Important administrative functions, well-developed services sector

The well-developed social and economic infrastructure of the capital city means that the tertiary sector plays a leading role in the economy of the region, bringing in about 81.5% of all revenue from gainful employment and employing three-quarters of all those employed. Industry plays a secondary role, producing 18.1% of the revenue from gainful employment and employing 21% of the total number of those employed. The most developed sectors are machine tool engineering and metal processing, metallurgy, food and beverages production, paper and textile industries.

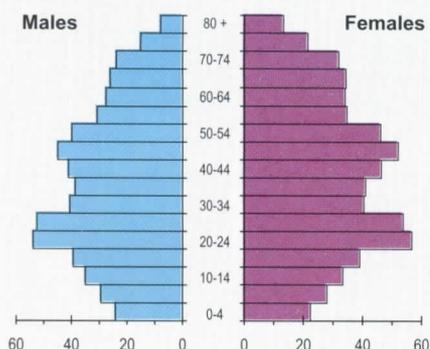
In addition to more people being employed here than in any other region, the number of those employed per 1 000 inhabitants (332 inhabitants) is above average, per capita foreign investment is greatest here and the unemployment rate at 9.3% is the lowest nationally.

Within the region there are numerous higher educational establishments, research institutes, health care establishments, museums, art galleries and offices. The oldest higher educational establishment in Bulgaria, the „St. Kliment Ohridski“ University of Sofia, is also situated here.

The necessary transport infrastructure is in place here both for road, rail and air travel. There is a hydro-power plant on the Iskar Dam (the largest dam in Bulgaria with a capacity 650 million m³) and two thermal power plants, TPP Sofia-South and TPP Sofia. All central governmental institutions also have their headquarters in Sofia (the Parliament, the President of the Republic, the Council of Ministers, the Constitutional Court, the Bulgarian National Bank), as well as the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and a number of national research and cultural institutions.

The tourist industry is well served in terms of accommodation, numerous tourist offices, museums and the many historical and architectural sites for which the capital is famous, including the Boyana Church, the St. Georgui Rotunda, and ruins of Roman walls. There are several nature reserves and natural landmarks on Vitosha Mountain as well.

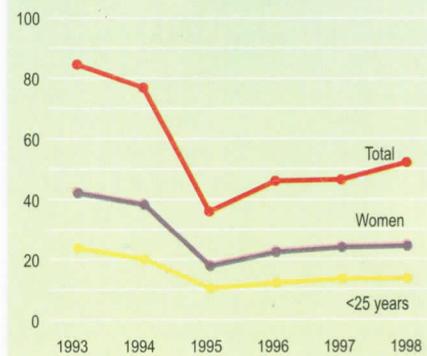
Age-sex pyramid in 1998 (1 000)



Demographic Account 1992-98 (1 000)

Population	31.12.92	1189,6
Births		67,6
Deaths		98,4
Migration		40,9
Population	31.12.98	1199,7

Unemployment (1 000)



Explanatory notes

Sources: National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria (all data relating to Bulgaria)
Eurostat database REGIO (all EU data)

Notes on specific graphs and tables

Table: Main indicators

Reference year: 1998, except for data for forested area (1986).

Activity rate: labour force as a percentage of the population aged 15 and over.

GDP: the regional split of data is preliminary.

Table: Agriculture - 1999

Persons working in agriculture: data from 1998

Number of private farms: data from 1996

Crops: data from 1998

Table: Communications

Length of road in km per km²: road length is hard-surfaced roads

Table: Main enterprises

Source: Annual Business Survey. Data from 1998

Graph: Employment by sector (%)

Source: Annual Business Survey.

Definition of sectors:

Agriculture - agriculture, hunting and forestry, fishing (NACE Rev.1. codes A-B);

Industry - mining, manufacturing, electricity, gas and water supply, construction (NACE Rev.1. codes C-F);

Services - trade, services, etc. (NACE Rev.1. codes G-P);

Graph: Resident employment by sex (%)

Resident employment data is taken from the Labour Force Survey.

Graph: Gross value added by sector - 1998 (%)

The gross value added by sector is based on gross value added at basic prices.

Graph: Health table

The total for Bulgaria does not equal the sum of the 28 regions, since the regional split of data does not reflect the number of hospitals that serve the needs of the population of the whole country, i.e. hospitals under centralised management.

Graph: Unemployment (1 000)

Source: Unemployment data is taken from the Labour Force Survey.

Graph: Wages by sectors - 1998 (ECU)

Definition: annual average wages and salaries.

Note on comparability

The definitions and methods used by the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria do not always coincide with those used by the Member States of the European Union. Comparisons of Bulgarian regions with regions in the EU should therefore be made with caution.

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Legend to maps

■ Plovdiv	<i>Town of over 100 000 inhabitants</i>
■ Vidin	<i>Town of over 50 000 inhabitants</i>
■ Dupnitsa	<i>Town of over 20 000 inhabitants</i>
● Radomir	<i>Town of over 10 000 inhabitants</i>
○ Simeonovgrad	<i>Town of over 3 000 inhabitants</i>

	Regional border
	State border
	Motorway
	A-class road
	B-class road
	Railway
	Waterway
	Lake
	Frontier crossing
	Port
	Airport
	National park

LEGEND

Regions of Bulgaria

Maps designed by Tanya Koynakova and Milen Boyadzhiev

National Statistical Institute, Department of Geographic Information Systems, Sofia - 2000

Symbols and abbreviations

>	Greater than
<	Less than
0	Less than half of the unit used

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
TPP	Thermal Power Plant
NPP	Nuclear Power Plant
M	Male
F	Female
km	Kilometre
m	Metre
mm	Millimetre
MW	Megawatt

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