

Vratsa District

▶ Population (2015)	173,588
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,619.8
▶ Number of settlements	128
▶ Share of urban population (%)	57.8

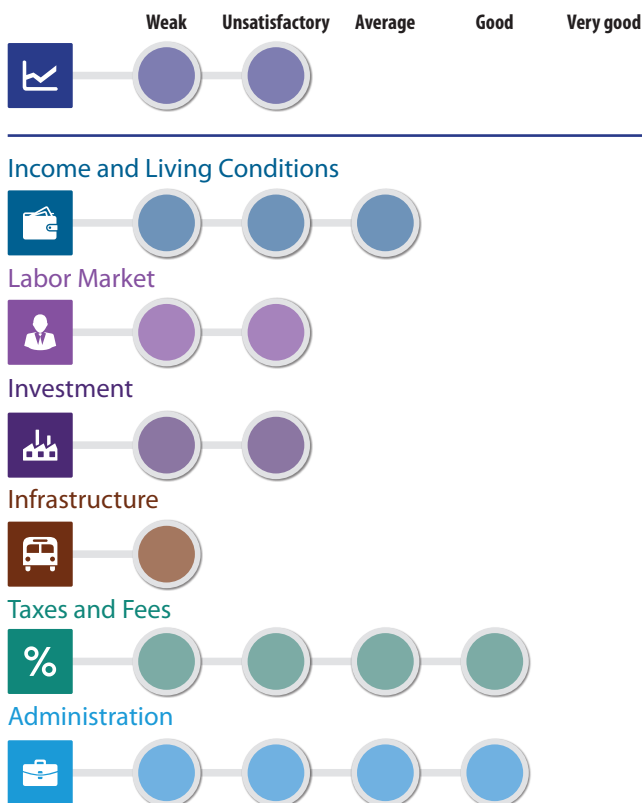


Overview

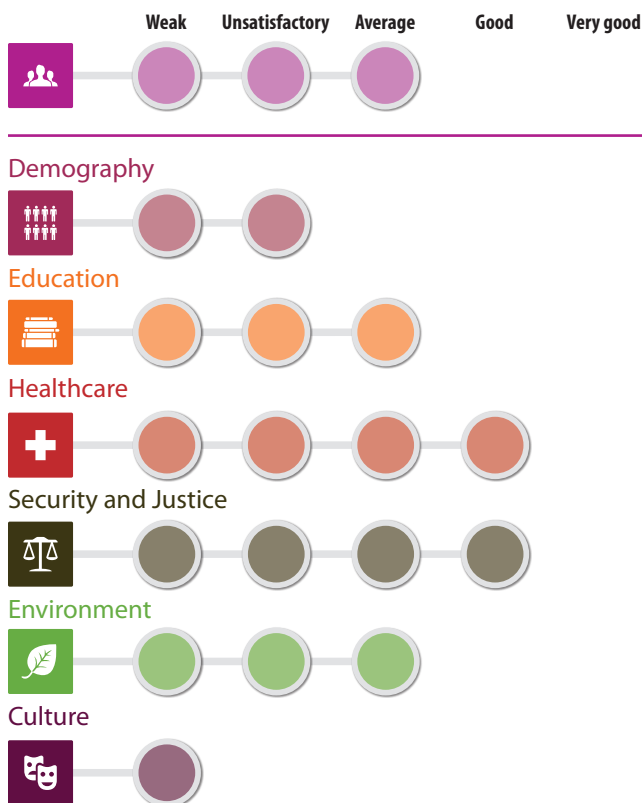
In 2015, the labor market of the district of Vratsa remained in deep crisis, with unemployment rate being the fourth highest nationwide and employment rate being the second lowest in the country. This had a negative effect on incomes and living conditions, still low in the district. The district achieved a relatively high rate of utilization of EU funds but the outflow of foreign investment has continued. Infrastructure is not well developed: only 15% of the roads in the district are in good condition. Administrative services are

relatively good but local taxes and fees are gradually rising. Vratsa is among the districts with most rapidly declining population. The greater number of indicators for the state of the educational system and healthcare are close to national average figures. Despite the relatively high crime rate, the clearance rate is high and the work of the district's court is relatively speedy. Vratsa is lagging behind in public sewerage system development and in WWTP construction. Cultural life is characterized by a low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●

In 2014, GDP per capita was 9,494 BGN vs. the national average of 11,574 BGN. Thanks to the high salaries in the “Kozlodui” nuclear power plant there were only two districts in the country where the average annual gross salary was higher than that in Vratsa (9,861 BGN in 2014). These were Sofia (13,542 BGN) and Stara Zagora (10,035 BGN). Nevertheless, the district’s living standard is low because of its unfavorable age structure and low employment rate. In other words, it is a relatively small part of the population, which gets high salaries. The share of both the population living in material deprivation (42.7%) and that of people living below the national poverty line (27.1%) remain higher than the national average figures of 33.1 and 21.9%, respectively.

Labor Market ●●

In 2015, the labor market in the district of Vratsa remained in deep crisis. Though economic activity has been traditionally low, in 2015 it registered yet another decline to 61.0% vs. the national average of 69.3%. The only district with a lower employment rate than that of Vratsa (50.3%) was Silistra (49.2%). The unemployment rate slightly declined to 17.7% in 2015, staying almost twice as high as the national average. Higher unemployment rates were registered only in Vidin, Silistra, and Shumen.

The workforce educational profile deteriorated in 2015 – the most alarming fact being the rising share of people with primary or lower education for a second successive year. In 2015, this share reached 22.2% (vs. the national average of 18.1%). People with higher education comprise 21.1% of those aged 25 to 64 (vs. the national average of 27.5%).

Investment ●●

At the end of 2014, the cumulative foreign direct investment fell to 138 m euro – the lowest value since 2007. Relative to the number of people, that makes 795 euro per capita, which is almost 4 times lower than the national average levels. However, in 2013 and 2014, FTA acquisition expenditure rose, reaching 2,152 BGN per capita in 2014 – thus exceeding the previous peak of 1,909 BGN per capita in 2010.

Municipalities in the district are doing relatively well in terms of EU fund utilization: 161.5 m BGN as of May 31st 2016. Relative to the population this is 930 BGN per capita compared to 689 BGN per capita on average in the coun-

try. The municipalities with the highest utilization rate are Mezdra (1,414 BGN per capita) and Vratsa (1,227 BGN per capita), whereas the municipality with the lowest rate is Borovan (43 BGN per capita).

Infrastructure ●

Though road density is close to the national average (17.8 km per 100 sq. km), the share of motorways and first class roads is low: 10.3% in 2014 vs. the country average of 18.1%. Road surface quality keeps deteriorating: only 15.0% of it was in good condition in 2015, which is the lowest percentage in Bulgaria. Vratsa was also the district with the lowest share of households with internet access and the second lowest share of persons to use it in 2015. The respective figures for the district were 31.1 and 30.2% – about two times below the nation’s average level.

Taxes and Fees ●●●●

The level of local taxes and fees in the district’s municipalities is more or less favorable though in 2016 five cases of raised rates were registered. The vehicle tax was raised in the municipalities of Mizia and Oriahovo (from 1.1 BGN/kW to 1.43 and 1.26 BGN/kW, respectively), while the waste collection fee for properties of legal entities was raised in Oriahovo and Byala Slatina. The immovable property tax for legal entities rose from 1.5 to 2‰ in the municipality of Mizia. The latter is also the single type of tax, whose average rate in Vratsa is higher than nationwide.

Administration ●●●●

The self-rating of municipal administrations shows that their readiness for one-stop shop services and the development of electronic government have reached higher levels than the country average figures. The rating by the AIP Foundation and Transparency International concerning the transparency of the local administration and the integrity system are lower, but close to the national average. Vratsa is still among the districts with the lowest coverage of its territory by cadastral maps: 7.1% in 2015 vs. 19.8% national average level. Lower levels have been registered only in the districts of Kardzhali (3.4%), Haskovo (3.8%), Pernik (4.5%), and Targovishte (6.0%).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●

Demography ●●

Vratsa is one of the districts where the negative consequences of the demographic crisis in the country are most clearly visible. Between 2001 and 2015 the district's population declined by 31.4% – Vidin was the only district with a greater drop of 32.2%. The deteriorating age structure of the population has entailed an ever diminishing natural growth rate that reached -11.3‰ in 2015, or nearly two times worse than the country average. During each of the last 15 years, a greater number of people have left the district than settling in it. In 2015 worse net migration rate than the one of Vratsa was registered only in the districts of Smolyan and Razgrad. Urbanization is relatively low in the district – in 2015, 57.8% of the district's population lived in towns vs. 73.1% for the country.

Education ●●●●

The educational system in the district achieved results close to the country average figures. Though the enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade was the second highest in Bulgaria (84.4% in the 2015/2016 school year), the share of repeaters (1.2%) and those of dropouts in primary and secondary education (1.0 and 2.8%, respectively) were less favorable than the country average figures. The quality of education in terms of the matriculation exam results is slightly lower than that in the remaining districts. A certain increase in the share of those who failed at the exam has been observed. It went up from 3.6% in 2013 to 10.8% in 2016. The number of students going to college and university in the district doubled since 2011 to reach 867 in 2015.

Healthcare ●●●●●

Healthcare services achieved better results in Vratsa than in most other districts. The number of hospital beds in general hospitals relative to the population reached 4.7 beds per 1,000 people in 2015 – the most favorable ratio for this indicator since 2001. However, this is due exclusively to the decrease of the population. The population morbidity is close to average and the infant mortality rate fell from 8.7‰ in 2014 to 6.4‰ in 2015 vs. 6.6‰ average for the country. The share of health-insured people was also higher than the average for Bulgaria (88.5%), reaching 90.8% in 2015. That was largely due to the rapidly ageing population and the fact that the share of health-insured people among the elderly is close to 100%. Despite the good values of these indicators, the ratio between both GPs and medical specialists and the population is worse than the average

figure for Bulgaria. This can be explained with the proximity of Vratsa to districts with traditionally good healthcare such as Pleven and Sofia (capital city).

Security and Justice ●●●●●

Though crime rates are relatively high in the district, the local judiciary and law enforcement bodies have achieved good results in their work. The clearance crime rate increased in the last two years to reach 51.1% in 2015, considerably above the national average (39.2%). The share of criminal cases closed within three months reached 95% (vs. the national level of 88.1%), whereas the number of pending cases was only 5.2% (vs. 9.4% nationwide). These good indicators for the efficiency of the judicial system were probably due to both the high clearance rate for crimes and the relatively low workloads of penal judges in the district court. In 2015, they had 6.2 cases per month, while the national average figure was 8.3 cases per month.

Environment ●●●●●

Air pollution is relatively low in the district of Vratsa. The levels of carbon dioxide emissions of 110.8 t/sq. km of the territory are almost three times lower than the average for Bulgaria. Vratsa is also one of the districts with less household waste collected per capita: 290 kg/person, compared to the average 442 kg/person in the country. The development of wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure, however remains relatively slow in the district. In 2014, 55.6% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems; 32.3% of the population had access to systems connected to wastewater treatment plants, while the country average levels were 74.9 and 56.8% respectively.

Culture ●

Cultural life in Vratsa is not intensive: only the number of visits to libraries comes close to the average levels for Bulgaria. Contrary to the national trends, interest in museums is gradually diminishing. In 2015, the number of visits to cinemas tripled compared to the previous year, reaching 9,600, which means 55 visits per 1,000 people. Among the districts with cinema houses, the rate was lower only in Razgrad – 29 visits per 1,000 people.

Key Indicators for the District of Vratsa

Indicators of economic development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,867	8,815	9,256	8,361	9,494	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,798	3,395	3,723	4,108	4,234	4,426
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	8,509	8,657	9,231	9,383	9,861	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	21.2	30.5	28.5	27.1	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	58.5	59.3	57.9	61.3	64.4	61.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	53.2	53.7	52.4	52.1	52.9	50.3
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	8.6	9.3	9.4	14.9	18.1	17.7
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	20.0	18.0	18.2	20.4	22.1	21.1
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	33	31	32	32	33	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,909	1,555	1,474	1,625	2,152	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	916	929	834	892	795	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	27.0	34.5	45.8	48.2	38.5	31.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	28.6	29.3	26.7	17.9	21.2	15.0
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1

Indicators of social development	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-10.4	-9.9	-11.1	-10.1	-10.8	-11.3
Net migration rate (‰)	-6.5	-3.2	-5.8	-7.4	-7.4	-6.9
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.1
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	4.2	3.7	6.3	3.6	4.1	7.7
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	83.7	85.6	85.7	84.6	85.0	84.4
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	86.0	88.6	88.0	87.4	88.6	90.8
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	170	166	206	227	191	217
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	20.8	19.6	18.6	17.5	15.1	15.6
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	44.8	38.6	37.4	43.7	51.4	51.1
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	2.8	3.3	3.8	3.0	8.1	5.2
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTP (%)	31.0	32.4	32.4	32.4	32.3	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/km ²)	110.4	110.4	105.2	91.4	110.8	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	13	13	8	3	17	55
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	118	183	204	232	279	229