

# Vidin District

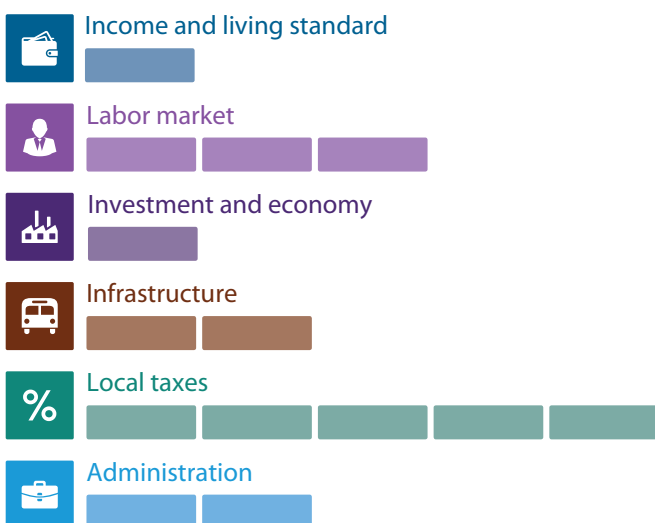
▶ Population (2018)	85,896
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3032.9
▶ Number of settlements	143
▶ Share of urban population (%)	65



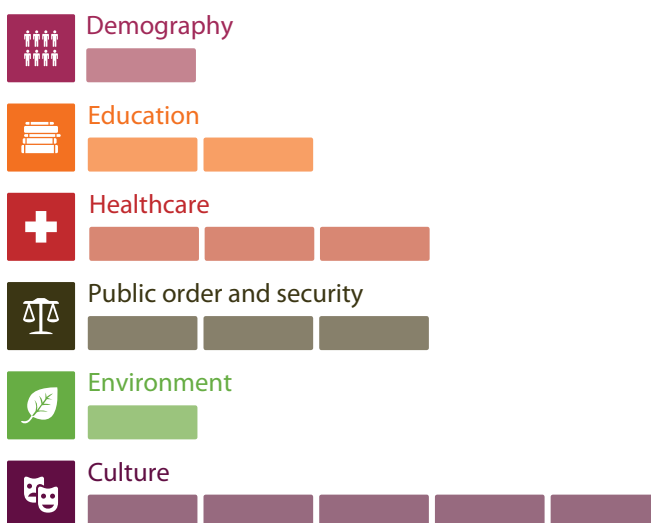
Most of the indicators of economic development in the district of Vidin lag considerably behind national average figures. The labor market continues to be riddled with difficulties, which can both be seen in the invariably high unemployment (close to 20%) and the annual average gross salary (8,233 BGN), the lowest in the country. In Vidin, the relative share of the population living below the national poverty line is 39% – only two other districts, Montana and Pazardzhik, have registered a higher percentage. After a short period of recovery in 2015 and 2016, the investment activity of local enterprises experienced yet another turn-down. The hopes for an invigorated economy in the region after launching the border crossing point at the *Vidin – Calafat Bridge* have not proved justified so far, partly due to the low quality of the surrounding infrastructure. Though the local taxes and fees have rates among the lowest in the coun-

try, the quality of administrative services is still not good enough. The unfavorable demographic conditions are at the heart of the slow economic and social development in the district. One of the few positive developments in the field of education was the opening of a local branch of Ruse University. The population's good supply with GP services cannot make up for the difficult access to medical specialists. The crime rate is above average but detection rates of the registered crimes reached record figures in 2018. Vidin continues to be the single district in which there is no working wastewater treatment plant. Unlike most other districts in similar socio-economic conditions, Vidin is characterized by a relatively high intensity of cultural life. The highest number of visits has been registered in museums, including the Baba Vida fortress.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■

### Income and living conditions ■

In 2017 GDP per capita in the district grew to reach 7,283 BGN but the indicator remained about twice lower than the national average of 14,280 BGN. The district has the lowest gross annual average salary in the country (8,233 BGN) and is thus one of the five districts (with Blagoevgrad, Kyustendil, Silistra and Haskovo), where it is still below 9,000 BGN. The low salaries and the unfavorable age structure of the population are the main reason why incomes from pensions make almost half the total household income in the district. These function as natural obstacles to income growth rate: in 2017, the annual average income per household member reached only 3,470 BGN versus the national average at 5,586 BGN.

30% of the population live in material deprivation, and 39% live with incomes below the national poverty line. Only Montana and Pazardzhik have higher rates of impoverished population (45.7% and 41.4%, respectively).

### Labor market ■■■

Though the employment rate of the population aged 15–64 reached in 2018 the record figure of 58.8%, the indicator remains way below the national average of 67.7%. The labor market has failed to generate sufficient opportunities for a great part of the working age population. Combined with the continuing rise in economic activity in the district it is no surprise that in 2018 the unemployment rate stayed at levels close to 20% – the highest in the country.

A major characteristic feature of the workforce in Vidin is the low share of people with university degrees (20.1%) – considerably below the national average of 28.2%, though the share of people with primary and lower education is more favorable (11.8% compared to the national average of 17.4%).

### Investment and economy ■

After a certain upsurge in 2015 and 2016, the investment activity of local enterprises shrank considerably in 2017. FTA expenditures dropped to 74 m BGN, the lowest value since 2013. These expenses amounted to only 846 BGN/person while the national average was 2,491 BGN.

As of 15 June 2019 the municipalities in the district utilized 153.3 m BGN in European funding, which means 1,785 BGN/person, the seventh highest figure of all districts. The highest utilization rates were achieved in the municipalities of Vidin (2,201 BGN/person) and Belogradchik (1,762 BGN/person), whereas the lowest were registered in Dimovo and Kula (under 400 BGN/person).

The number of enterprises per person was lower only in the districts of Montana and Kardzhali. The district of Vidin also had the lowest production value in 2017 – only 6,350 BGN/

person, while the national average levels were almost 4 times higher.

### Infrastructure ■■

The unsatisfactory condition of infrastructure continues to be one of the chief obstacles to the district's development. Since its opening, the border crossing at the *Vidin – Calafat Bridge* has not generated the expected positive effects on the local economy precisely because of the missing good accompanying infrastructure.

Though the road network in Vidin has above-average density, only 12% of it consists of first-class roads, while highways are absent. Road surface quality is the highest in north-western Bulgaria, with 38.3% of roads in good condition. The railroad network density in the district is similar to the national average levels of 3.6 km/100 sq. km.

In Vidin, the percentage of the population with Internet connection is 61.7% – smaller connectivity has been registered only in the districts of Sofia (51.3%) and Kyustendil (59.8%).

### Local taxes ■■■■■

Vidin is one of the districts in which residents and businesses enjoy the lowest tax burden regarding local taxes. The only tax rate higher in the district than the national average is that of the property transfer tax. Most other local taxes, including the license fee for taxi transport, introduced in 2017, are closer to the set legal minimum.

Since 2011, there have been only a few cases of raised taxes, and the only municipality where the tax burden increased significantly was that of Bregovo. It was precisely the Bregovo authorities that took the most recent decision on a local tax raise: the property transfer tax was raised from 2.60 to 3.00% in 2018.

### Administration ■■

Though the level of administrative services remains unsatisfactory, municipal administrations in the district have improved their performance in a number of aspects. They have achieved better results in AIP's annual Active transparency rating: their average rating has gone up from 55.0 to 63.0% (relative to a 70.7% national average level). The local authorities' declared readiness to offer one-stop-shop services has also improved, as well as the degree of development of electronic services. However, the district has remained below national average levels on both indicators.

The significant increase in cadastral map coverage of the country, which took place in 2018, included the district of Vidin, with a rise of 8.2 to reach 68.1% – a level close to the national average of 72.4%.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

For yet another successive year Vidin has had the least favorable figures in demography: that refers to both the population age structure and the ongoing demographic processes. As early as 2012 Vidin was the first district whose population dropped below 100,000 people, and in 2019 that number was already below 86,000 people.

For each working age person in the district there correspond two persons aged over 65. At the same time, the ratio of persons aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is the second highest after Gabrovo. In 2018 Vidin was once again the district with the least favorable natural growth rate (–16.4‰), as well as the district with the second least favorable rate of net migration (–7.6‰). 64.6% of the district's population lives in urban areas.

### Education

The relatively small number of repeaters (0.89%) is indicative not so much of the good work of the educational system but rather of its inability to keep a considerable part of those subject to education in school. In the school years 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 the relative share of dropouts from primary and secondary education remained above 4%, and the net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade (82.9%) remained one of the lowest in the country.

At the same time, the relatively good performance of students at the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature continued in 2019. The district's average grade rose to "good" 4.18 (vs "good" 4.06 for the country as a whole). In keeping with the general tendencies, however, there was an increase in the share of those who failed at the exam: from 3.3% in 2018 to 6.8% in 2019.

Nevertheless, there were some positive developments in the educational system. Recent data shows that there are already over 300 students enrolled in the branch of Ruse University, which opened in 2017.

### Healthcare

Vidin has one of the best ratios between the number of inhabitants and that of GPs (1,432 people per GP), the only districts with better rates being Kyustendil and Pleven. At the same time, access to medical specialists is the least favorable of all districts in north-western Bulgaria. Though population morbidity (measured by hospitalization numbers in general hospitals) is similar to the national average, the district is lagging considerably behind both regional and national average levels

in availability of hospital beds in general hospitals. There are 3.90 beds per 1,000 people relative to 5.34 nationally.

In 2018, 90.8% of the district's population had health insurance – the national average rate was 87.9%.

### Public order and security

In 2018, in the Vidin district there were registered 14.1 crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people (versus 12.1 per 1,000 people in the country as a whole). This implies a criminality above average; yet, the same holds true of the crime detection rate, which reached a record high of 68.2% in 2018, while the national average rate was 48.9%.

The workloads of criminal judges at the District court was below the national average level but the same year the relative number of pending cases doubled to reach 9.5% (versus 8.7% nationwide).

### Environment

The low rating of Vidin in this category is mostly due to the persistent problems with wastewater treatment. There is still no working treatment plant on the district's territory. A project to build one to serve the needs of the city of Vidin has been launched but in 2017 it was discontinued on suspicions of corruption. The low urbanization of the district entails a low number of people living in areas with public sewerage systems (barely 57.2% versus 76% for the country).

Carbon dioxide emissions have continued to go down, reaching below 3 t/sq. km, while the generated household waste of 275 kg/person annually is among the lowest in the country.

### Culture

In 2018 the district achieved above average visit rates to its theaters (42%) and libraries (6%). Museum visits were more numerous, including those to the Baba Vida fortress. In 2018 their number reached 184,000 – a ratio to the population three times higher than the national average rate of 724 visits per 1,000 people. The number of cinema visits is the only indicator visibly lagging behind the national average: 319 visits per 1,000 people were registered in 2018 – twice below the country average.

## Key indicators for the district of Vidin

Indicators of economic development	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,066	6,258	6,401	7,283	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,383	3,677	3,428	3,470	n.a.
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	6,663	7,011	7,522	8,233	n.a.
Share of the poor relative to the country poverty line (%)	38.1	43.6	48.2	45.9	39.0
Economic activity rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	71.0	72.3	68.2	69.6	73.4
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	55.3	58.8	57.0	56.2	58.8
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	22.2	18.8	16.4	19.2	19.9
Share of people with tertiary education aged 25–64 (%)	17.2	21.5	18.5	18.5	20.1
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	32	34	34	35	n.a.
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN per capita)	925	1,756	1,282	846	n.a.
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR per capita)	547	864	794	831	n.a.
Share of households with Internet access (%)	45.4	48.0	67.8	61.7	61.7
Share of roads in good condition (%)	34.2	32.3	40.2	38.0	38.3
Cadastral map coverage (%)	2.1	8.2	8.2	8.2	68.1

Indicators of social development	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Natural growth rate of the population (‰)	-15.2	-16.7	-16.9	-16.2	-16.4
Net migration rate (‰)	-7.0	-6.3	-9.5	-5.9	-7.6
Average grade at the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature	4.24	4.22	4.20	4.26	3.96
Percent of grades lower than 3.00 (pass level) at the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature	3.7	6.1	6.0	5.5	3.3
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	78.4	77.9	75.6	85.6	82.9
Share of people with health insurance (%)	89.8	91.5	91.7	90.5	90.8
Hospitalizations per 1,000 people	166.3	168.3	169.4	163.7	172.3
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.8	14.4	13.1	13.7	14.1
Clearance rate for crimes against the person and property from those registered in the current year (%)	36.1	38.1	57.4	60.5	68.2
Share of pending criminal cases from those registered in the current year (%)	13.1	7.9	9.0	4.1	9.5
Share of the population with access to sewerage connected to wastewater treatment plants (%)	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (tons of harmful emissions/sq. km)	142.9	142.9	4.5	2.7	n.a.
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 people	138	373	358	374	319
Visits to the theater per 1,000 people	342	382	484	427	485