

Vidin District

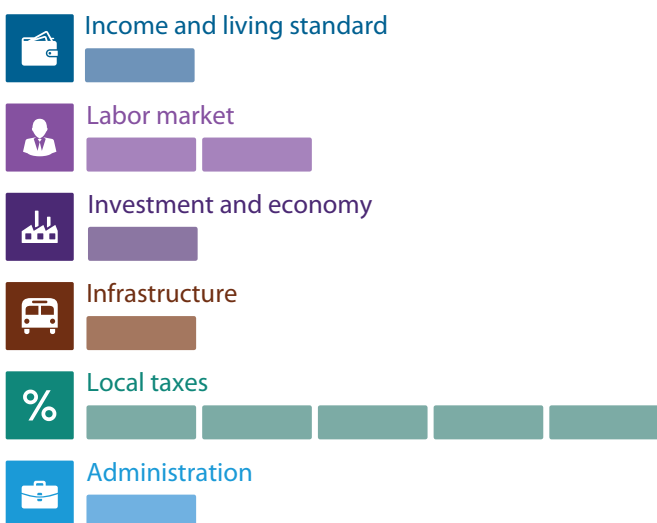
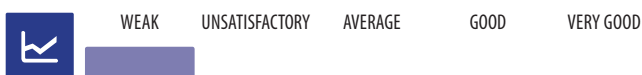
▶ Population (2019)	82,835
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,032.9
▶ Number of settlements	140
▶ Share of urban population (%)	64.9



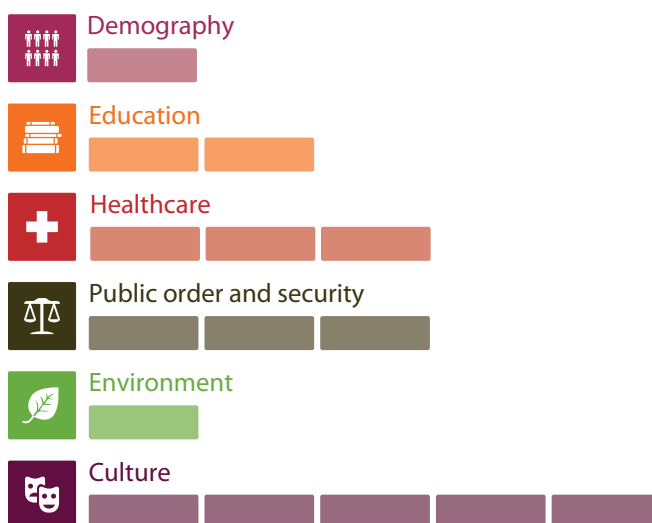
Vidin is among Bulgaria's districts with the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life. Salaries and incomes have been rising too slowly, remaining far below the national averages. In 2019, as previously, the district also performed poorly as regards the indicators for the labor market, which faces the additional challenge of population ageing. Vidin is one of Bulgaria's regions with the lowest FDI figures. Similar to other districts with low economic activity, the local municipalities keep tax rates relatively low. Vidin district also shows the worst results in the whole country in the Administration category. The trend towards population ageing is more strongly pro-

nounced in Vidin district than anywhere else in Bulgaria. The results in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature are essentially identical to the national averages. The proportion of GPs in the district is larger than the average one in the country; however, in 2019 there was again a serious shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. Crime rates are relatively high but detection is also high. Vidin is the district with the lowest carbon dioxide emissions in the whole of Bulgaria. There is not a single waste water treatment plant in the region. The main factor for the district's good performance in the category of Culture is the large number of visits to the local museums.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■

Income and living standard ■

Vidin is among Bulgaria's districts with the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life. GDP per capita in the district of Vidin has been rising, though at a much slower pace than in the rest of the country, and at 7,900 BGN is almost half the national average of 15,600 BGN. Although salaries and incomes have been rising, their increase has been too slow and they remain far below the national averages. In 2018 the gross annual salary in Vidin district went up to 9,100 BGN, whereas the national average was 13,800. What is more, in 2019 the annual income per household member even shrank by 1% to 3,437 BGN, compared to the national average of 6,013 BGN. This was due to the high proportion of old-age pensions in the formation of annual incomes and the respective lower contribution of salaries.

Given the above factors, in 2019 Vidin retained its position as one of the districts with the highest poverty rates in the country. The proportion of people living in material deprivation went up by 1 p.p. to reach 31%, versus 20% nationwide, while the share of those living below the poverty line went down to 35%, but still remained far higher than the national average of 23%.

Labor market ■■

In 2019, as in previous years, the district's performance as regards the indicators for the labor market was once again unsatisfactory. Economic activity rates continued to improve and at 75.6% were once again higher than the national average of 74.3%. Accompanying this growth, however, were low employment and high unemployment rates. Parallel to the rise in labor demand was a fall in employment rates which reached 56.5%, compared to 70.1% in the country on average. Unemployment figures fell slightly to 19.1% but still remained nearly 5 times higher than the national average of 4.2%.

The share of the population with secondary education in the district is relatively high. The share of people with a university degree is 19.2%, against the national average of 28%. Those with primary or lower education constitute 15.4%, whereas on a national scale the figure is 17.6%.

Population ageing is another challenge facing the labor market in the district of Vidin. The demographic replacement ratio (the ratio between people aged 15-19 and those aged 60-64) in 2019 was 63%, versus the national average of 66%. Thus every 100 people who will leave the labor market in the next few years could be replaced by 63 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and economy ■

Vidin is one of Bulgaria's districts with the smallest relative number of enterprises. In 2018 their number reached 37 per 1,000 persons, while in the country as a whole it was 59 per 1,000 persons on average. Vidin was also the district with the lowest rate of FTA expenditures – 851 BGN/person, versus the national figure of 2,750 BGN/person, and of production value,

which was as low as 7,000 BGN/person against 25,900 BGN/person as the national average.

Cumulative FDI per capita continued to rise and in 2018 it reached 953 EUR/person, which is still 4 times lower than the average national figure of 3,560 EUR/person.

Utilization of EU funding improved and by 15 June 2020 reached the national average. The payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,983 BGN/person, with the municipalities of Belogradchik and Vidin taking the top places.

Infrastructure ■

The density of the road and railroad networks in Vidin district nearly equals the national average. However, the share of highways and first-class roads remained considerably lower in 2019 – 11.6%, against the country's average of 18.6%. Road quality was also much worse – only 28.4% of road surfaces were in good condition, compared to the national average of 41.4%.

The relative share of households with internet access also remained relatively limited in 2019 – 63.0%, against 75.1% on average nationwide.

% Local taxes ■■■■■

As in most of the less economically developed regions, the municipalities in Vidin district keep local rates relatively low. What is more, the average tax burden in the district is the second lowest in the country after that of Montana, and when averaged, each of the five monitored rates in 2020 was lower than its average counterpart in the country. The greatest difference was registered in the retail trade tax. Its average figure in the district was 4.55 BGN/sq.m, against 12.93 BGN/sq.m in the country as a whole. The average annual tax rate for taxi transportation was also relatively low – 300 BGN, versus the national average of 498 BGN.

Administration ■

Vidin district also shows the worst results in the whole country in the Administration category. In 2020, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-administration and on the provision of one-stop shop services took a downward turn and fell further below the national average. Local e-administration achieved a rating of 2.57 p. out of 5 p., compared to 3.22 p. nationwide, and the provision of one-stop shop services was rated 2.19 p. out of 5 p., versus the national average of 3.09 p.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration also decreased slightly in 2020 and at 61.9% was again below the national average of 70.7%. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipality in Belogradchik, and the lowest ones by those in Bregovo and Gramada.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■

Vidin is the district where the tendency towards population ageing is more strongly expressed than anywhere else in Bulgaria. Indeed, it is this district that has the worst figures for birth rates, as evident from the natural population growth rate, which was -16.4% in 2019, and although there was no change from the previous year, it remained far below the national average of -6.7% . Out-migration from the district is still ongoing, which is proved by the relatively low net migration figure of -7.9% for 2019. All of this points to Vidin district as the region with the worst age dependency ratio in the whole country.

Vidin is among the districts with a relatively low share of population living in urban areas – 64.9%, versus the national average of 73.7%, and with a low population density – 844 persons/sq.km, against 1,510 persons/sq.km on a national scale.

Education ■■

Vidin is among the districts with the lowest net enrolment in 5th-8th grade, coming second only after Dobrich. In 2019 the figures fell further for the second year in a row, reaching 78.9% against the national average of 86.6%. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were also higher than average.

The students in the district performed quite poorly in the 2020 external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade, with 28.7 points on average, compared to 36.3 points in the country. At the same time students' performance in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature showed values close to the national average. The average score was 4.21, compared to 4.20 nationally, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 8.8%, against 8.2% nationwide.

The number of primary and secondary school teachers showed an increase to 88 per 1,000 students in 2019, which almost equals the national average of 89 per 1,000 students. This, however, was less due to new recruitments than to students leaving the district.

Some favorable tendencies can be observed in the sphere of higher education. The branch of Ruse University which opened in the city of Vidin in 2017 now has an enrolment of over 400 students.

Healthcare ■■■■

The proportion of people with health insurance continued to rise in 2019 and again exceeded the national average, mostly due to the increased share of old-age pensioners in the population in the district. The proportion of GPs was higher than the country's average but 2019 again marked a serious shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. The number of beds in the local general hospitals was 404 beds per 100,000 persons, compared to the national average of 550 per 100,000 persons. These limiting factors can probably ex-

plain the relatively low hospitalization figures for 2019 – 155 per 1,000 persons, versus 254 per 1,000 persons nationally.

In 2019 infant mortality figures rose considerably for the second consecutive year, reaching 9.1‰, compared to 5.6‰ as the national average.

Public order and security ■■■■

Criminal judges in Vidin district have small workloads, dropping down to an average of 6.6 cases a month per one judge in 2019, compared to 9.1 nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 92%, against the national average of 90%, but the past few years have shown a worsening tendency.

The number of crimes is high, but so are detection rates. The crimes against the person and property registered in 2019 dropped to 13.2 per 1,000 persons, versus 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The rate of detection decreased compared to the year before, but at 64.6%, it still remained above the national figure of 52.1%.

Environment ■■

Vidin is the district with the lowest carbon dioxide emissions in the whole of Bulgaria. In 2018 they amounted to 3.6 t/sq.km, compared to the national average of 274.8 t/sq.km. Nevertheless, the district's performance based on the Environment indicators is extremely poor.

The proportion of the population with access to public sewerage systems slightly improved, reaching 58% in 2018, yet the figure remained far below the national average of 76%. Vidin is also the district with the lowest access to wastewater treatment plants – 0.5% of the population, versus an average of 64% across the country.

The amount of waste generated by households increased in 2018 to reach 339 kg/person, and although this figure was again below the national average of 409 kg/person, only a very small part was handed over for treatment and recycling – 10%, whereas the national figure was 71%.

Culture ■■■■■■

The main factor for the district's good performance in the category of Culture is the large number of visits to the local museums. Figures for 2019 indicate 2,546 visits per 1,000 persons, or 3 times the national average of 770 per 1,000 persons. Visits to the local theaters and libraries were also high in number. Registered visits to the theater counted 423 per 1,000 persons against the average of 362 per 1,000 persons for the country, and the figure for visits to libraries was 631 per 1,000 persons, with 683 per 1,000 persons as the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Vidin

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,283	7,926	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,470	3,470	3,437	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	8,233	9,103	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	39.0	35.0	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	56.2	58.8	56.5	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	19.2	19.9	19.1	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	10.6	11.8	15.4	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	18.5	20.1	19.2	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	6,350	6,954	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	846	851	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	831	953	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	61.7	61.7	63.0	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	38.0	38.3	28.4	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	20.3	20.2	20.2	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	55.1	63.0	61.9	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-16.2	-16.4	-16.4	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-5.9	-7.6	-7.9	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.96	4.18	4.21	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	25.1	24.6	28.7	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	79	80	88	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	85.6	82.9	78.9	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	90.5	90.8	92.7	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,172	1,432	1,428	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.7	14.1	13.2	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	8.7	7.3	6.6	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	57.2	57.6	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	275	339	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	2.4	9.9	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	374	319	397	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	427	485	423	362

* The data for 2019 are included in the 2020 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2019-2020 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2020. The same also applies for the previous years.