

Vidin district

► Population (2021)	78,814
► Territory (sq. km)	3,033
► Number of settlements	140
► Share of urban population (%)	64.9



Vidin is the district with the worst indicators for income and quality of life. Positive trends are noticeable in the labor market, but the rates remain unfavorable. Investment and business activity are relatively weak, and the infrastructure is not sufficiently developed. In 2022, Vidin retained its place as the district with the lowest average rates of the monitored local taxes. The results of the self-assessments of the local administration rank Vidin at the bottom of the scale. In 2021, Vidin remained the district with the most un-

favorable demographic picture in the country. Its performance in the field of education is unsatisfactory. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. In 2021, the workloads of criminal judges in the district increased, but the speed of delivery of justice also rose sharply. The relatively low share of the population living in cities accounts for the relatively limited share of households connected to a public sewerage network. The performance of Vidin district in the field of culture improved in 2021.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■

Income and living standard ■

Vidin is the district with the worst indicators for income and quality of life. GDP per capita in the district of Vidin rose in 2020, though at a slow speed, reaching 8,800 BGN, but in the last two decades its lag behind the national average has kept increasing. Employed people's salaries have been increasing, but they still remain among the lowest in the country, after only those in Blagoevgrad district. The average annual income per household member in 2021 was 4,700 BGN, compared to 7,700 BGN nationwide.

These trends affect the poverty levels in the district, which remain quite high. In 2021, the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 43.3%, against 22.1% in the country, and of the population living with material deprivation – 27.0%, versus 19.4% countrywide.

Labor market ■■

Economic activity in the district decreased in 2021 for the third year in a row, falling to 69.0%, compared to 72.0% in the country, and remained at a relatively low level. At the same time, there has been a rise in employment and a decrease in unemployment, though both rates remain significantly less favorable than the country's averages. The employment rate is 57.5%, compared to 68.1% in the country, and the unemployment rate is 16.7%, against 5.3% in the country.

2021 marked an improvement in the educational structure of the workforce, but it cannot compensate for the deterioration of the previous years. The share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education reached 19.8%, compared to 29.6% in the country, and the share of people with primary or lower education was 17.6%, versus 16.6% nationwide.

One of the major challenges facing the local labor market is population ageing. The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 rose significantly after 2013, but in 2020 it again remained lower than the national average – 66.1%, compared to 69.4% nationwide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 66 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and economy ■

Investment and business activity in Vidin district again remained relatively slack in 2020. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population was among the lowest in the country – 37 per 1,000 persons, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons in the country.

FTA acquisition expenditures per person in Vidin district rose considerably – by 27%, compared to 6% in the country, but

they still remain among the lowest nationwide – 1,100 BGN/person, compared to 3,300 BGN/person in the country. At the same time, the district has witnessed a drop in investment flows, which have fallen to 968 EUR/person, versus the national average of 3,900 EUR/person. Production value has also declined to 7,200 BGN/person, which is the lowest figure in the country and nearly four times below the average.

The amounts paid to beneficiaries under EU operational programs relative to the population in the district are comparable to the national average and have grown significantly. By June 30th, 2022, such payments reached 2,600 BGN/person, with the municipalities of Belogradchik and Vidin taking the top places within the district.

Infrastructure ■■

Vidin is the district with the worst infrastructure indicators in the country, alongside Vratsa and Montana. The density of the road and railway networks is close to the national average. However, in 2021 the share of first-class roads and highways (11.3%, compared to 18.5% in the country), and that of road surfaces in good condition (28%, compared to 42% in the country) remained considerably lower than the national averages. Household access to the Internet remains low, even though it has risen to 74.8%, compared to 83.5% nationwide. Vidin is one of the two districts (along with Smolyan) without a gas supply network.

Local taxes ■■■■■

In 2022, Vidin was once again the district with the lowest rates for the monitored local taxes. The difference was especially big as regards the taxation on retail trade – 4.58 BGN/sq. m on average for the district, against 12.99 BGN/sq. m in the country. The level of taxation on motor vehicles was also extremely low.

Vidin city municipality levies the lowest taxes in the district, and Bregovo and Ruzhintzi have the highest.

Administration ■

Vidin is also the district with the worst performance of the local administrations (alongside Kyustendil). In 2022, the district municipalities' self-assessments on the development of their e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services were the lowest in the country. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations also remains relatively low and has even decreased in the past two years, moving down to 57.4% versus 70.2% in the country. Cadastral map coverage is 97.4%, which equals the national average.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■

Vidin remains the district with the most unfavorable demographic picture in the country for 2021. The natural population growth rate fell rapidly and reached its lowest value of -25.7‰, which is almost half the national average of -13.25‰. At the same time, the district fails to attract population and the net migration rate has again a negative value (-4.4‰), with 2020 as the only year when it had a positive one.

The long period of rapid population ageing also finds its reflection in the extremely unfavorable age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of the population 65+ to those aged 0–14 has reached 248.0%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and for those aged 15–64 it is 50.9%, versus 34.0% in the country.

The urban population remained relatively low in 2021, while population density was almost twice as low as the national average.

Education ■■

The performance of Vidin district in the field of education is unsatisfactory. In 2021, the district was again among those with the lowest net enrollment rate in 5th–7th grade – 78.8%, compared to 85.9% in the country. The share of repeaters remained double the national average.

The performance of students in the 2022 national external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was again extremely poor. With an average score of 21.6 points (against 35.3 points in the country), the district occupied the lowest place nationwide. The performance of high school graduates was better but also below the national average. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 3.83, compared to 3.97 nationally, while the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was relatively high – 19.9%, against 17% nationwide.

The number of teachers in primary and secondary education relative to student numbers went up in 2021 and for the second year in a row was higher than the national average, with 110 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to the national average of 97 teachers per 1,000 students.

Positive trends can be observed in higher education. In the academic year 2020/2021, the branch of the University of Ruse, which opened in Vidin in 2017, already had an enrolment of over 450 students.

Healthcare ■■

The proportion of people with health insurance reached 92.4% in 2021 and again exceeded the national average of 88.7%. The proportion of GPs remains relatively high but healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has been rising in the past few years but it still remains

relatively low – 4.25 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons in the country. This probably explains why in 2021 hospitalization figures were again relatively low – 134.9 per 1,000 persons, versus 222.6 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

The infant mortality rate in Vidin district rose sharply in 2021, reaching 13.3‰, compared to 5.6‰ in the country.

Public order and security ■■■■

Despite the rising workloads of the criminal judges in Vidin district, in 2021 they remained below the national average, while the speed of delivery of justice recorded a sharp increase. There were 7.6 cases a month per judge on average, compared to 9 cases per judge nationally, and the number of cases closed within 3 months reached 94%, compared to 89% in the country.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property has been falling but it still remains above the national average – 10.5 per 1,000 persons, against 9.8 per 1,000 persons in the country. At the same time, however, the detection rate has gone up to reach 57.0%, versus 51.7% countrywide.

Environment ■■

The amount of generated household waste in 2020 was relatively low – 368 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. At the same time, however, the share handed over for treatment and recycling remained very small: 18.9%, with over 69.3% countrywide.

The relatively low share of the population living in urban settlements can account for the relatively limited share of households connected to a public sewerage system in 2020 (57.7% of the population, compared to 76.3% in the country) and to wastewater treatment plants (49.3%, against 66.7% in the country). The shares of both forest areas and disturbed areas are low.

Culture ■■■■

The pandemic and restrictions on cultural events throughout the country affected the district as well. Still, in 2021 cultural life in Vidin district revived somewhat, even though it remained far below the levels of 2019. The number of cinema visits more than doubled to 232 per 1,000 persons, compared to 351 per 1,000 persons as the national average. Theatre visits reached 154 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 129 per 1,000 persons, and library visits numbered 386 per 1,000 persons, versus 449 per 1,000 persons nationally. Only museum visits have decreased, though their number remains relatively high – 545 per 1,000 persons, compared to 426 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Vidin

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,780	8,847	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,302	11,253	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	35.0	43.3	43.3	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	70.1	69.1	69.0	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	56.5	55.7	57.5	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	19.1	19.3	16.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	15.4	18.5	17.6	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	19.2	18.0	19.8	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	7,649	7,209	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	839	1,065	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,052	968	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	63.0	44.8	74.8	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	28.4	24.6	28.3	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	20.2	20.2	20.1	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	61.9	60.2	57.4	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-16.4	-21.9	-25.7	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-7.9	2.1	-4.4	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.21	4.12	3.83	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.7	28.4	21.6	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	78.9	80.8	78.8	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	94	104	110	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	92.7	91.2	92.4	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,428	1,465	1,433	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	13.2	12.5	10.5	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.6	4.3	7.6	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	57.9	57.7	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	369	368	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	18.9	18.9	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	397	102	232	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	2,546	1,139	545	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.