

# Vidin District

Population (2012)	98 509
Area (sq. km)	3 032,9
Number of settlements	143
Share of urban population (%)	63,9



## Overview

The demographic crisis experienced by Vidin District in recent years has had a serious negative impact on various aspects of local social and economic development. The increasing mean age and continuing processes of outbound migration create additional preconditions for the deterioration of the age structure of the population. Employment and income in the district are low while unemployment is high. The district shows good results only in the field of healthcare. The business environment is somewhat favoured by low taxes in most municipalities, but in contrast there is lack of appropriately educated workforce and depressed local consumption. Environmental quality was assessed as "average" because of the underdeveloped infrastructure in the district which favours nature conservation. Infrastructure developments in the district are also lagging. The impact of the commissioning of the Danube Bridge at Vidin - Calafat in the summer of 2013 is yet to be assessed.



## Economy

In terms of economic development, the district is among the most underdeveloped in the country. GDP per capita is twice lower than the national average; in 2010 worse performance was reported only by the districts of Silistra and Sliven. In 2012, unemployment in the district decreased by three percentage points, but is still high: 17.4% against a 12.3% national average. In some of the smaller municipalities in the district unemployment reaches 40-50%. Employment also increased but remains the lowest in the country: only 37%. The low economic activity of the population is largely the result of the extremely unfavourable demographic situation in the district and the low qualification of a dominant part of the local workforce.

In 2010 and 2011, the investment activity in the district showed some improvement, but this was not sufficient to generate higher levels of employment and higher incomes. Measuring the cumulative foreign investment per capita at the end of 2011, worse results were reported only in the districts of Veliko Tarnovo, Kyustendil, Montana, and Silistra. Until the end of 2012, municipalities in the districts failed to become more active in EU operational programmes, and the funds disbursed were a little over BGN 9 million, which is the lowest absolute value for any district in the country.

The share of industry in the structure of gross value added for the Vidin District is significantly lower than the national average; this indicates a low level of industrial development. The commissioning of the second bridge over the Danube connecting the cities of Vidin and Calafat is expected to have a positive impact on the economic activity in the district.

## Taxes and Administration

The tax environment in the district is relatively favourable. Most local taxes and charges are lower than those in other districts, and the rate of the annual license tax for retail trade is the lowest in the country. The only exception here is the municipality of Ruzhentsi, where the rate is disproportionately large: 2.5 times higher than that for the district centre (the city of Vidin).

The outdated methods of administrative services provided to citizens and businesses continue to be a problem. Out of the eleven municipalities in the district, only Vidin and Kula declared a higher level of preparedness to provide one-stop-shop services. The penetration of electronic services is also lagging behind; in the period May 2012 - May 2013 these were used by only 16% of the surveyed businesspeople, against a national average that is double that figure.

The only factor that gets Vidin District closer to the country's average indicators on the various components of the business environment is the quality of work of the district and municipal administrations. The judiciary also enjoys a good reputation. The business community's expectations regarding the dynamics of the number of employees, investment and turnover in the next 12 months (June 2013 – May 2014) are rather on a pessimistic note.

## Infrastructure

The density of the road network in the district is higher than the national average. However, the condition of the road surface has deteriorated in recent years; according to the Road Infrastructure Agency, in 2012 only 29% of the road surface was in good condition, against over 40% in 2010. About a quarter of roads are in need of rehabilitation.

The Danube Bridge at Vidin - Calafat was put into operation in the summer of 2013. There remain concerns about the quality of the infrastructure leading to and from it, especially in terms of the capacity of the Class One road to the capital city to deal with the increased international traffic.

Vidin has a well-built railway infrastructure, but it is in need of modernization. The renovation of the Vidin - Sofia - Kulata railway line is planned for the next EU programme period (2014-2020).

In 2012, only one-third of the households in Vidin had Internet access, which is attributable to the relatively low level of urbanisation, and the age structure of the population. In the same year, less than half of people aged 16 to 74 used the Internet.

## Demographics

In 2012, too, Vidin District kept its bottommost position in demographic terms. Between 2001 and 2012, the population shrank by almost a third, making Vidin the only district with a population of less than 100,000 people. About 64% of the population lives in urban areas.

The age structure of the population is extremely unfavourable. Vidin is one of three districts in which for each person aged under 15 there more than two persons aged over 65 years. The other two districts in a similar situation are Gabrovo and Kyustendil.

The district is characterised by pronounced negative trends in natural population increase and net migration rates. As a result of the low birth rate and high mortality during the last decade, the rate of natural increase is negative, and in most years it was three times higher than the national average (which ranged between -3.5 and -5.5‰).

The net migration rate is also negative (-3.8‰ in 2012). One-third of the residents of the districts said they were willing to leave it, given an opportunity, which is a clear sign of further depopulation. In combination with the high negative rate of natural increase of the population, these attitudes portend an even more serious demographic deterioration for the district.

## Education

Vidin District registered values close to the national average for the majority of indicators in the field of elementary and secondary education covered by the survey. At the same time, the lack of higher education establishments and the low proportion of university graduates in the district lowered the final score for the category to "unsatisfactory". In 2012, people with tertiary education among the population aged 25 to 64 years old were 15.7%, against a national average of 24%.

The net enrolment rate of the population in grades 5th through 8th is slightly lower than the national average. In 2012, eight out of ten children who should be attending school in these grades actually attended school. The share of repeaters is also lower than the national average: 0.8% in 2012 against 1% in 2011 and 0.9% national average in both years. However, about 3% of students drop out of the education system each year, which is one of the highest values in the country. In the school year 2012/2013, students completing their secondary education in Vidin achieved an average score of 4.23 (the highest being 6.00) at the state exams in Bulgarian Language and Literature. 4.8% of the students failed the exam, which is close to the average level for the country.

## Healthcare

Developments in the healthcare system in Vidin largely follow the demographic trends in the district. The reduced number of residents led to the closure of one of the hospitals, and also to the gradual reduction in the number of beds, which have nearly halved since 2001. There is a shortage of cardiologists and hospital beds in the district, but overall the availability of hospitals and specialists for the local population is close to the national average.

About 89% of the population in the district have valid health insurance, which is largely due to the high proportion of elderly people in the area. In proportion to the number of population, the number of patients seeking treatment in the two multiprofile hospitals for active treatment has decreased in recent years and is at much lower levels than the national average. The hospitals are located in the towns of Vidin and Belogradchik, and the total number of beds in 2012 was 360. One in five residents of the district had to travel outside its borders to obtain health care services they needed, which is a lower percentage than what most other districts have reported. The main explanation given was the lack of specialists.

## Environment

The quality of the environment in Vidin District was rated as "average." The majority of the negative indicators stem from the underdeveloped infrastructure which contributes to preserving the natural environment. Only about 56% of the population is connected to public sewerage facilities; this is mostly due to the low level of urbanisation in the district. The scope of the sewerage network is largely limited to the towns of Vidin and Belogradchik. Lower levels of sewerage availability are reported only in Vratsa, Razgrad, and Silistra. In 2012, Vidin District still had no functioning waste water treatment plant. In August 2013, a contract was awarded for the design and construction of such a plant in the town of Vidin, but the facility will be operational no earlier than the end of 2014.

The air quality control system in Vidin is only one and it is located in the district centre. Over the past few years, high levels of fine particle pollution have been reported in the heating season. In view of the characteristics of the local industry and declining number of the population, the emissions of harmful substances into the atmosphere can be assessed as high, despite the fact that their concentration is below the national average. Household waste is not recycled, but the construction of a regional landfill is has been launched.

Residents of the Vidin District rated the quality of the environment below the national average.

## Social Environment

The low standard of living and poor economic activity of the local population have an extremely negative impact on the social environment in the district. Nearly a quarter of local residents live in households with low work intensity, and one in two residents lives in material deprivation. The share of the population below the poverty line for the district is 36.2%, against an average of 22.3% for the country.

Citizens gave "average" scores to many aspects of life in the district. Infrastructure received the lowest rating: 2.1/5.0 against 2.8/5.0 average for the country. The past few years have seen an increase in the number of registered visits to the theatre, reaching almost 28 thousand in 2012, at 21 thousand in 2009. There are no cinemas in the district.

In line with trends in the rest of the country, the number of recorded crimes against the person and against property per 1,000 population has decreased since 2010; these levels are traditionally lower in Vidin than in most other districts. Residents of Vidin District gave the lowest scores to the work of the municipal and district administrations, while schools and the judiciary received the highest marks.

## Key indicators for the district of Vidin

Indicators / year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5 079	4 879	4 681	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	39,1	36,4	35,0	35,8	37,0
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	12,9	13,0	13,1	19,8	17,4
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	29,0	29,3	36,2	n.a.	n.a.
Age dependency ratio, 65+ to 15-64 (%)	37,2	37,6	37,8	41,7	42,8
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-14,7	-13,8	-14,8	-15,2	-16,0
Net migration rate (‰)	-6,1	-6,9	-6,2	-1,9	-3,8
Relative share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	16,7	16,4	18,9	18,1	15,7
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams (%)	4,2	6,2	3,6	1,9	8,3
Average grade at state matriculation exams	4,3	4,2	4,3	4,5	4,1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	43,4	30,0	29,4
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	10,9	25,3	27,7	46,6	33,7
Share of the population with access to public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	n.a.
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87,9	89,5	86,7	89,8	89,1
Infant mortality rate (‰)	9,8	11,7	8,4	8,0	11,2
Number of registered crimes per 1,000 persons of the population	13,7	14,0	17,5	15,1	13,9