

Montana District

▶ Population (2014)	140,473
▶ Area (sq. km)	3,635.6
▶ Number of settlements	131
▶ Share of urban population (%)	64.3



Overview

Following two years of stagnation, the labour market in Montana District started recovering slowly in 2014. Nevertheless, incomes remained low, and the share of people living in households with low work intensity remained high. Montana is the district with the lowest attracted foreign investments in proportion to the population. The tax environment is relatively favourable, but the development of administrative e-services and the infrastructure have lagged behind.

Montana is one of the districts in Bulgaria where the demographic crisis has been the most severe. In 2015 school-leavers from the district achieved their poorest results since state matriculation exams were introduced in 2007. A shortage of health professionals has been noted in healthcare. The environment is well preserved, and harmful emissions are low. Registered crimes against the person have been on the increase since 2011. Montana is the district featuring the lowest intensity of cultural activities in Bulgaria.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and Living Conditions



Labor Market



Investment



Infrastructure



Taxes and Fees



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Security and Justice



Environment



Culture



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●

In 2013 the average annual gross salary in the district was 6,995 BGN compared to the national figure of 9,301 BGN. The rate of its increase has been slower than the country average in recent years, but its level has remained higher than other districts featuring a similar economic profile, such as Lovech and Vidin. Due to the low employment rate, Montana is the district where salaries account for the smallest share of household incomes – they were barely 38.2% in 2014 compared to the country average of 56.2%.

The share of the population living in households with low work intensity has been almost twice as big as the country average. The relative poverty line in the district amounted to 3,287 BGN in 2012 (compared to the country average of 3,431 BGN), and 23% of the population lived below it. The share of the population living in material deprivation has been lower than its national counterpart since 2007.

Labour Market ●●

Following two years of stagnation, the labour market in Montana District started recovering slowly in 2014. The population's economic activity increased, reaching 49.0%; the employment rate of the population aged 15+ has surged to 41.0%, exceeding 40.0% for the first time since 2010. However, the district has reported data far below the country average levels of employment (48.0%). A minimal decrease of the unemployment rate was reported in 2014, but it continued to be high (16.3% for the district compared to the country average of 11.4%).

In 2014 59 people aged 15–19 were to replace 100 individuals aged 60–64, who were to abandon the workforce. This demographic replacement rate was lower than its national counterpart of almost 62 per 100 for the same year.

Investment ●

Montana was the district with the lowest total of foreign direct investment attracted in 2013, in proportion to the population – 271.2 EUR per capita compared to the national average of 3,230.9 EUR per capita. Expenditure on the acquisition of FTAs has gradually recovered to pre-crisis levels though remaining considerably lower than the country average.

The rates of utilisation of EU funds on behalf of municipalities benefiting under operational programmes have been similar to the national average. As of 31 January 2015, the total of funds utilised by the municipalities in Montana District amounted to 79.9 m BGN. The municipalities of Montana and Varshets achieved the highest rates of utilisation in proportion to the population (919.5 BGN per capita and 812.7 BGN per capita respectively), while the municipalities of Yakimovo and Boychinovtsi drew down the lowest ones (17.1 BGN per capita, 73.8 BGN per capita respectively).

Infrastructure ●●

Infrastructural development has lagged behind in Montana District. The density of the road and railway networks in the district (16.6 km per 100 sq. km and 3.1 km per 100 sq. km respectively) is lower than the country average (17.7 km per 100 sq. km, 3.6 km per 100 sq. km respectively). The share of roads in good condition increased from 22.0% in 2012 to 31.4% in 2014, but is still far below the national indicator of 40.5%.

The relative share of households with Internet access was 47.9% in 2014 compared to the national average of 56.7%. The share of people (aged 16–74) who used the Internet for the past 12 months was also smaller – 56.1% compared to the national average of 59.2%.

% Taxes and Fees ●●●●●

The level of local taxes and fees has been considerably lower in Montana District than nationwide. The annual license tax for retailers is two times lower than the average for the country. The taxes on the transfer of property and the immovable property tax for legal entities are closest to the country average.

Varshets is the only municipality where some local taxes and fees have been raised. Its tax on the sale of immovable property increased from 1.0% in 2012 to 2.0% in 2013 and 2.5% in 2014, and the annual waste collection charge for properties of legal entities increased from 6.5‰ in 2012 to 8.5‰ in 2013. The charge was lowered in Berkovitsa (from 8.7‰ in 2012, to 8.5‰ in 2013 and 8.3‰ in 2014) and Lom (from 5.5‰ in 2012 to 4.5‰ in 2013 and 3.5‰ in 2014).

Administration ●●

The development of the cadastral map stopped as early as 2010 when 12.3% of the district's territory was included compared to the country average of 15.9%. In the country as a whole the territory included in the cadastral map later increased to 18.1% in 2014 while it remained unchanged in Montana District. E-services have continued to lag behind; the municipalities of Lom and Brusartsi had the most developed ones in 2015. In one-stop shop services, the district has performed relatively well, and five out of eleven municipalities have declared a high development level.

The weighed grade of the district in the Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies by the AIP Foundation is 41.7 out of 88.4 points, compared to the country average of 54.5 in 2015. The municipalities of Boychinovtsi and Valchedram received the highest grades (60.6 points, and 53.3 points respectively), and the municipalities of Yakimovo and Lom received the lowest ones (26.5 points, and 30.6 points respectively).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●

Demography ●

Montana is one of the districts in Bulgaria where the demographic crisis has been the most severe. The population decreased by 25.5% from 2001 to 2014, the fourth highest value after the districts of Razgrad, Vidin and Vratsa.

The rate of natural increase is also the most unfavourable one after Vidin District, lower than that in districts with worse age structure, such as Lovech and Gabrovo. The number of people leaving the district diminished from 2011 to 2014, but it has continually impacted the demographic background.

64.3% of the district's population lived in towns and cities in 2014 compared to the national average of 73.1%.

Education ●

Although the net enrolment rate (grades 5th through 8th) is higher than in most districts, and the share of repeaters is comparable with the country average, the quality of education is not good. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education was 3.3% in 2013 compared to the country average of 2.4%, and the results achieved by school-leavers at state matriculation exams were relatively low. The lowest grades were given in 2015 when the share of failures reached the district's record high level of 10.7% (compared to the national average of 6.4%), and the average grade fell to Good (4.04) compared to Good (4.21) for Bulgaria.

Montana is one of the five districts without institutions of higher education. This is one of the reasons for the low share of people with university degrees, aged from 25 to 64 – 17.1% in 2014 compared to the country average of 27.0%.

Healthcare ●●●

The number of general practitioners is relatively big, but the ratio of the number of cardiologists (12,770 people per cardiologist) and internists (7,024 people per internist) to the local population was more unfavourable in 2014 than the country averages of 5,767 people per cardiologist and 5,902 people per internist.

The number of beds at multi-profile hospitals for active treatment has remained constant in recent years. There were 5.1 beds per 1,000 people in 2014, while the national figure was 4.8 beds per 1,000 people. Simultaneously, the workload of hospitals has been high. 36,727 people were hospitalised in 2014, which accounted for 261.5 per 1,000 people of the population – the highest figure in Bulgaria. Health insured persons were 87.4% of the district's population in 2014, which corresponds to the national average.

Security and Justice ●●

The actual workload of penal judges at the District Court was 5.1 cases per month per judge in 2013. Lower levels of this indicator were only observed in the districts of Targovishte (3.5 cases) and Pernik (4.4 cases). Nevertheless, the share of pending criminal cases remained high – 10.3% compared to 8.5% for Bulgaria. The share of criminal cases closed in the first 3 months gradually increased in 2012 and 2013 and reached 91.0%, which was higher than the country average of 88.4% in 2013.

Registered crimes against the person in Montana District (in proportion to the population) fluctuated about the country's average levels till 2010, but systematically exceeded the country average from 2011 to 2014. Crimes against property, however, remained relatively limited, and 63.4 crimes of this type per 10,000 people were registered in 2014 compared to 89.0 per 10,000 people in the country.

Environment ●●●●

58.7% of the district's population lived in settlements with public sewerage systems in 2013 (compared to the national average of 74.7%), and 34.2% of it was connected to waste water treatment plants (compared to the country's average of 56.4%).

The expenditure on environmental protection began to increase in 2012 in the district, reaching the country's average levels of 288.9 BGN per capita in 2013. The project for the construction of a water cycle in the town of Montana, which includes modernisation and equipment of the waste water treatment plant in the town, was concluded in 2015.

Montana was among the districts with the lowest emissions of carbon dioxide in 2013 – 6.5 t/sq. km, compared to the national average of 293.9 t/sq. km. Only the districts of Dobrich, Kardzhali and Smolyan had lower concentration of this type of harmful emissions.

Culture ●

Montana is the district with the lowest intensity of cultural activities in Bulgaria.

In proportion to the population size, registered visits to museums and libraries in the district are almost half the country averages of 662 visits to museums per 1,000 people and 518 visits to libraries per 1,000 people in 2014. Visits to the theatre were about 11,000 in 2014, and their number was lower in proportion to the population only in the districts of Pernik and Smolyan (excluding Sofia District, where there is no theatre). These 81 visits per 1,000 people are about four times fewer than the country's average of 319. In 2014, Montana remained one of the five districts featuring no cinema.

Key Indicators for the District of Montana

Economic Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	5,255	5,152	5,951	6,044	n.a.	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	2,838	3,037	2,961	2,994	3,276	4,117
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	5,641	6,028	6,289	6,572	6,995	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the district's poverty line (%)	23.4	23.0	24.9	23.0	n.a.	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population 15+ (%)	47.7	46.2	45.5	46.1	46.8	49.0
Annual average employment rate of the population 15+ (%)	42.9	40.6	39.1	39.2	39.0	41.0
Annual average unemployment rate (%)	10.1	12.2	14.1	14.9	16.7	16.3
Number of non-financial companies per 1,000 people	32	32	31	31	31	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	670	669	1,128	997	1,077	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	163	160	173	217	271	n.a.
Relative share of households with Internet access (%)	19.1	22.7	29.0	37.5	36.4	47.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	24.8	25.8	22.0	29.1	31.4
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	10.2	12.3	12.3	12.3	12.3	12.3

Social Development	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-10.5	-12.3	-12.3	-12.8	-11.7	-12.8
Net migration rate (‰)	-4.8	-6.2	-3.2	-3.4	-2.7	-3.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education (%)	15.7	15.4	15.8	18.1	18.4	17.1
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.1	4.1	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.2
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams	5.6	6.8	3.2	9.4	6.4	6.9
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.9	85.4	87.9	87.1	86.1	87.4
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals	226.5	230.4	245.1	255.3	260.4	261.5
Crimes against the property per 10,000 people	90.8	110.6	95.3	77.1	81.5	63.4
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	10.7	9.4	10.0	12.5	10.3	n.a.
Expenditure on environmental protection per capita (BGN)	52.0	45.4	79.5	172.0	262.8	n.a.
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WTPP (%)	4.2	33.3	33.9	34.0	34.2	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	67.7	71.5	66.3	49.8	67.0	81.2