

### About the Region

The Vardar Planning Region is situated in the central part of the Republic of Macedonia. It includes the middle drainage of the Vardar river, the lower flows of the Bregalnica and Crna Reka creeks and the farthest Western part of Ovchepolie.

It covers area of 4.042 km<sup>2</sup> which is 16% of the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. The region includes 9 municipalities with 215 populated areas. It features exceptionally low population density - 38 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (the average in the country is 81 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>) and large concentration of the people in the cities (around 69%). Almost half of the municipalities (four) are rural.

### *Natural resources*

The Vardar Planning Region has excellent climate for development of agricultural, especially viticulture. The agricultural land spreads on 145.699 ha (12% of the total agricultural land in the Republic of Macedonia), 70.006 ha of which is arable land, including also 75.666 ha of pastures. The region includes around 45% of the total vineyard plantations in the country. The total area covered by forests is 150.009 ha (15% of the total forests in the Republic of Macedonia). The wooden mass is 8.8 million m<sup>2</sup> (11% of the total wooden mass in the country) while the wooden mass planned for cutting and exploitation is 10%.

Regarding mineral resources, the most important from economic point of view are the ferrous-nickel ores, with dominant presence of perlite, talk, the quartz rocks and the diatomite.

The water resources include the lower sections of rivers Vardar, Crni Drim, Bregalnica, Babuna, Topolka and Otovica that provide opportunity for construction of 6 hydro power plants, three of which have been already built – Tikvesh, Lisiche and Mladost.

### ***Natural and cultural-historical heritage***

The most prominent features of the natural and cultural-historical heritage in the region are the natural reserve "Tikveshko Ezero", the monument of nature "Demir Kapija" and Stobi archeological site which are important resources for development of the tourism. The long-term tradition of wine production provides for development of wine tourism. The region also has potential for development of the mountain tourism by constructing the ski-center at Kozhuf mountain.

### ***Population and demographic characteristics***

According to the latest Census from 2002, the Vardar Planning Region had 154.535 inhabitants. The Region features exceptionally low population density - 38 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> and large concentration of the people in the cities.

### ***Economic characteristics***

The region has significant potential for development of the economy. The central position in the country, the Corridor 10 and the highway, the proximity to both airports (Alexander the Great and the cargo airport in Shtip), the railway and the Vardar river make this Region a very interesting business destination.

### ***Transport infrastructure***

The present road infrastructure in the Vardar Planning Region includes around 909 km local roads, 56,5 km of highway, 60,5 km of main roads and 557 km of regional roads.

The Vardar Planning Region includes part of the Skopje-Veles-Gevgelija-Greek border railway,

with a total length of 106.6 km as well as part of the Veles-Bitola railway line (45km), the Gradsko-Sivec railway line (16.3 km) and part of the Veles-Kochani railway line (15.6). The total length of the railway network is 183.5 km which is a density of 44.2 km on 1.000 km, which is again more than the national average of 27 km. This region includes three minor airports for the agricultural aviation (Peshirovo-Sveti Nikole; Crveni Bregovi – Negotino and Rosoman – Kavadarci).

The Region borders the Skopje Planning Region and has relatively good and quick access to the Alexander the Great Airport near Petrovec, Skopje.

Important for this region is that one section of the Thessaloniki-Skopje oil pipeline runs through it, along the Corridor 10.

### ***Energy***

The thermal power plant Negotino plays very important when it comes to electricity. This Region also includes the Dubrovo substation which acts as a central hub for electricity transmission within the Republic of Macedonia and towards (from) Greece. The Negotino area provides opportunities for excavation of coal to be used for generation of electricity but this option needs to be additionally investigated.

Important energy potential of the Vardar Region is the use of the hydro potential of the Vardar river through the Vardar Valley energy project.

The Vardar Region includes many sunny hours in the year, including significant presence of wind, so there is opportunity to use the energy of both wind and sun.