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Pilot Site Bononia

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1. Basic Information on the Archaeological Site and its Location

Modern name of the site	Vidin
Roman name of the site, if known	Bononia
Country, Region	Bulgaria, Northwestern region
Municipality	Vidin
Type of the site (<i>e.g. fortification, settlement etc.</i>)	Ancient fortress; remains of ancient city
Single site or multiple component site (cluster)	Multiple component site
Dating of the Roman site	End of the I - beginning of the II century
Dating of construction phases, if known	From the end of the I to the beginning of the VI century
Area of the site [in ha]	20 ha
Elevation of the site [in m AA] ¹	35 m AA
Coordinates of the site using WGS84 = EPSG:4326 (<i>if your site covers a large area, indicate a single point its centre</i>)	<i>Roman city Bononia/Vidin, BG</i> 43° 59' 35.902" N, 22° 52' 32.726" E
Cover with building structures	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fully/partly covered with modern superstructures <input type="checkbox"/> not covered Short description: The ancient Bononia lays under the modern city of Vidin. Some parts of Bononia are covered with modern building structures, while others could be found in open (unbuilt) places, e.g. parks.
Site visibility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> underground remains not visible <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> underground remains uncovered and visible (excavated, conserved) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archaeological remains above surface until today <input type="checkbox"/> physical reconstructions above archaeological remains
State of research (<i>e.g. fully excavated, confirmed by geophysical surveys etc.</i>)	Only part of the ancient city Bononia is excavated. Last confirmed discovery at the site (Oct.2020) is the Western Gate of ancient Bononia, the city's main entrance during the Roman Age, dated from 4 th -6 th century. From this gate started the "decumanus maximus", the main street of the city. It crosses today's entire quarter of "Kaletu" in the town of Vidin.
Conservation status, if known	Partially conserved
List of known remaining archaeological structures	Western gate, walls, tower
List of Roman military force stationed at the site (<i>e.g. LEGIO, COHORS, ALA</i>)	First Cisipaden cohorts

¹ m AA = Meters Above the Adriatic

Access to the Danube in ancient times	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
Access to the Danube today	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
Access to a tributary river in ancient times	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no If yes, please indicate the name:
Access to Roman Road Network	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no If yes, please indicate the name of the road: Via Istrum
UNESCO status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tentative List status <input type="checkbox"/> World Heritage status <input type="checkbox"/> application process still ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> no UNESCO status (except the fortress "Baba Vida", which has Tentative List status)
Legal protection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> by national Monument Protection Law <input type="checkbox"/> by planning tools (e.g. protection of townscape, designation of areas, zoning etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> others Please list and describe:
Institutions involved in research on the site (today and in the past)	National Institute of Archaeology and Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Regional Historical Museum of Vidin
Institutions and stakeholders involved in the presentation of the site	Ministry of Culture, Vidin Municipality

2. Archaeological Remains

2.1. History of the Site

The remains of a fortress wall and adjacent towers of the ancient city of Bononia are located on an area of 20 ha and date from the I-VI century CE. It is said to be the largest Roman fortress on the Lower Danube River. Bononia is located under the central part of modern city of Vidin, whereas the newest findings are in the Kaleto neighborhood.

Bononia emerged at the end of the I and the beginning of the II century CE as a castle and a road station within the province of Moesia. Most likely, an auxiliary military unit was stationed at this place (the First Cisipade Cohort, a horse cohort, as part of the elite Roman soldiers), engaged in the construction of the Danube road, providing protection of the Danube border, and designed to stop barbarian attacks from the north and east.

After the division of the province of Moesia in 86 CE, Bononia remained within the boundaries of Upper Moesia and was attached to the urban territory of Ratiaria, which was considered the capital of the province. In the II-III century the city flourished, in association with the

withdrawal of the Roman colonizers from the province of Coastal Dacia – after 272 CE, under Emperor Aurelian. Its port served the Danube military and merchant navy. By the end of the III and the beginning of the IV century, Bononia was already a significant settlement, with a fortified area and a solid defense system, which equated it to the large urban centers of the newly formed province of Coastal Dacia. The fortification system of the city is known from the archeological research of the separate parts of the fortress wall, which allows its tracing and determination of the fortified area. The length of the northern wall is about 365 m, and the western - about 600 m. So far, a total of nine adjacent round towers with a diameter of 25-30 m and a wall thickness of 3.70 m have been discovered. Ancient Bononia lasted until 586, when it was conquered by the Barbarians and devastated by Huns and Avars, but was restored (unlike Ratiaria and Dorticum) and continued to exist in the Middle Ages, when the Bulgarians built the Bdin fortress. In the XI and XII centuries, Bononia was again part of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium). The excavations gave clear information about this restoration of the fortress by the Vasilevs of Constantinople. During the Second Bulgarian Kingdom here is the center of the Vidin Kingdom, ruled by Tsar Ivan Sratsimir (end of XIV century).

2.2. Composition and Appearance of the Archaeological Site

We can draw a quite accurate picture of the composition of ancient Bononia. In the picture below, we can see marked in yellow the boundaries of the ancient city.

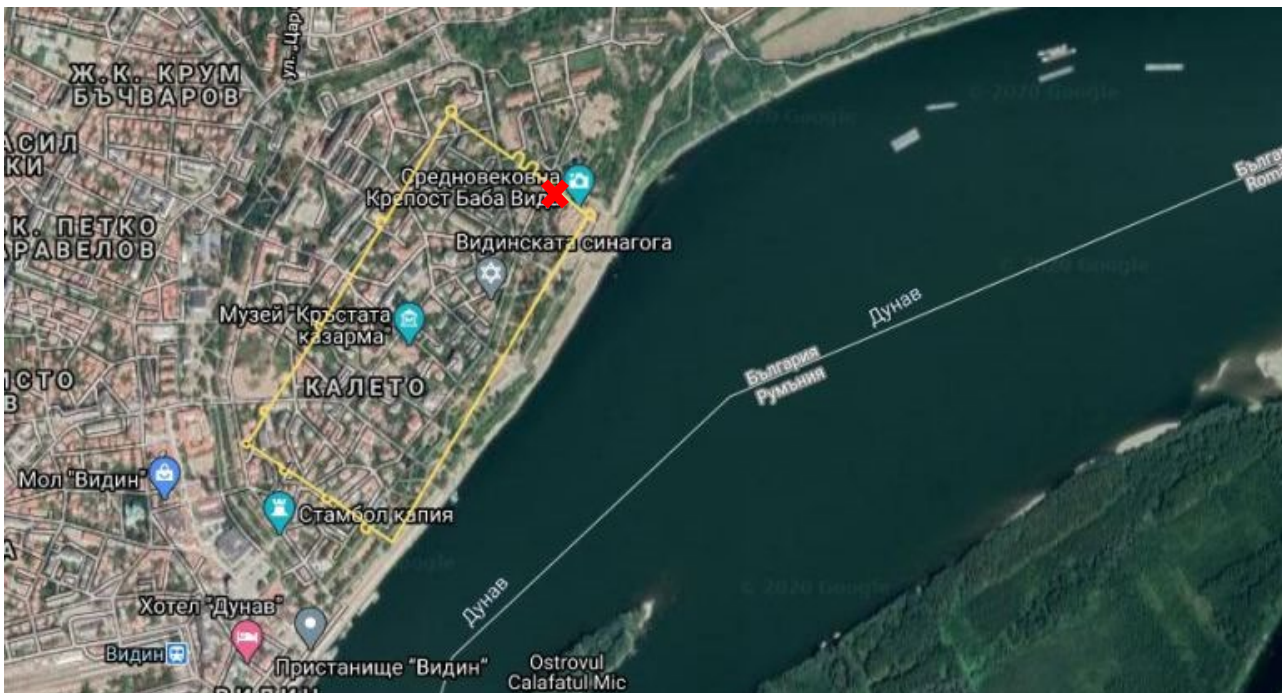


Fig. 1. Google Maps (28 April 2021).

The city has a rectangle shape, extended in a north-south direction, with an area of about 20 ha. The length of the northern wall is about 365 m, and the western about 600 m. Nine round towers with a diameter of 19 m and a wall thickness of 3.7 m were discovered.

The proposed site subject to further researches (marked with red cross on the map above) belongs to the walls of the ancient city. It is located between the north-western tower of Baba

Vida fortress (assumably built on the remains of the Roman tower) and the Western gate of Bononia (discovered in October 2020 in the “Kaletо” neighborhood). The area is part of the city park and might be suitable for nondestructive researches. The exact situation of the assumed walls is marked with a black line on the map below.

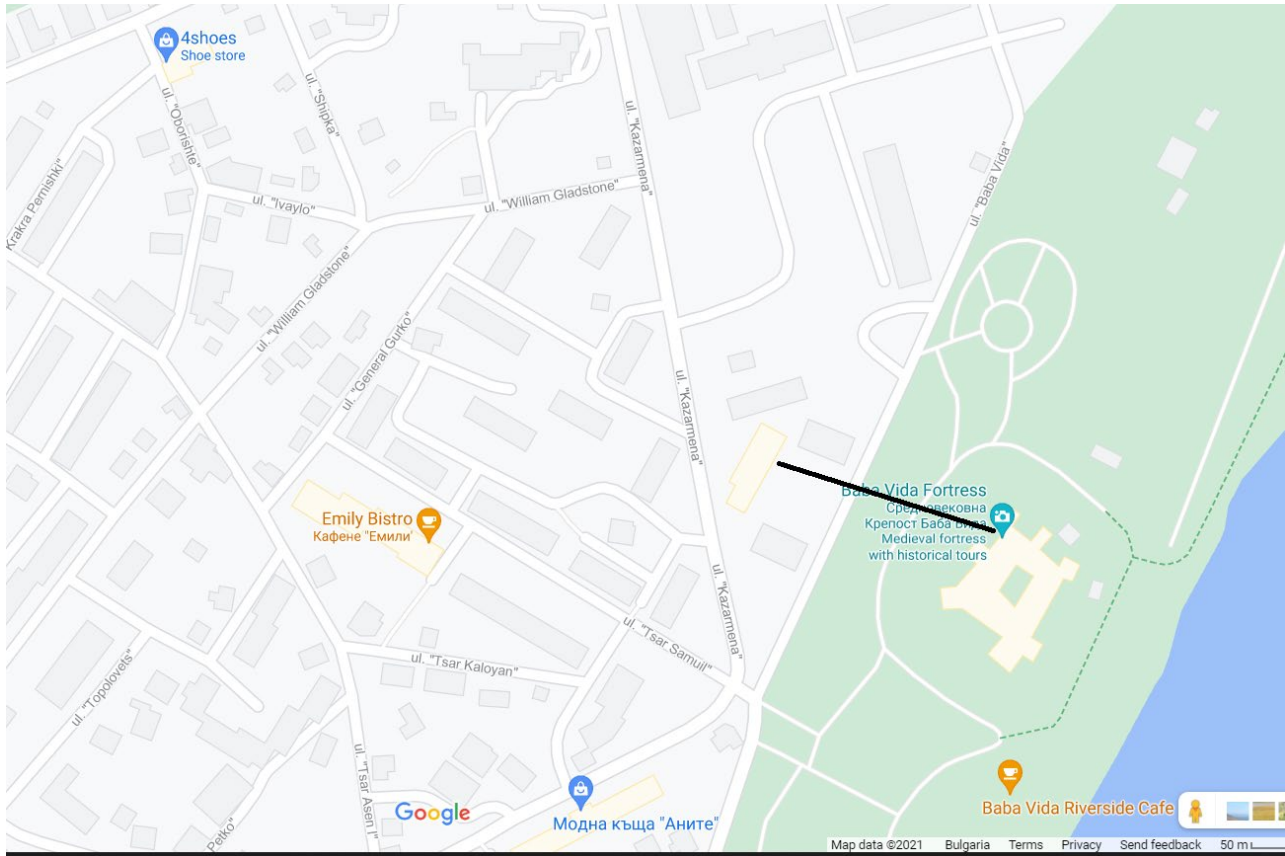


Fig. 2. Google Maps (28 April 2021).

2.3. Architectural Structures

- Remains of fortress walls and towers: They are one of the most significant all over Bulgaria. The cultural layers are over 6 m deep, at some places almost 7 m. The towers are decagonal and have a diameter of around 25-30 m. The walls of the fortress are approximately 4 m wide, and the passage of the western gate is over 5 m. They were surrounded by a ditch, filled with water. This is the archeological site with the most representative and most powerful remains along the entire Danube bank of the Roman Empire in the Bulgarian lands.
- The construction of the walls is firmly fused with white mortar. The arrangement of the stone rows from the tower and the walls, which overlap, is easily recognizable as being the same building structure.
- Decagonal Roman Fortress Tower from Ancient Bononia (2018)
- The main gate of the Roman city Bononia, dating from IV-VI century. It is the most recent discovery – October 2020.
- The remains from the fortress walls, surrounding the ancient city Bononia.

- The ruins of a decagonal fortress tower from the Ancient Roman city of Bononia – said to be the largest Roman fortress on the Lower Danube.

2.4. The Most Important Finds and their Message

- The material findings, among all stands the bronze head of Emperor Nero, discovered by J. Atanasova in rescue excavations in the 1960s, also coins, weapons, household items, ceramics, terra sigillata, architectural decorations from buildings, seals and other monuments with epigraphic content, etc. Most of them are exhibited in the Regional Historical Museum in Vidin.

2.5. Surrounding Area

The ancient city of Bononia is located under the city of Vidin. The remains of it, that are already discovered, are in plain site in the city center and around it (in the biggest residential neighborhood “Kaleto”). The medieval „Baba Vida“ Fortress (the only fully preserved fortress in Bulgaria) is built on the remains of the ancient city of Bononia.

The city of Vidin is surrounded by nature and small villages. In 27 km south-east are the remains of Ratiaria and 13 km south-west is the village of Sinagovtzi with new Roman remains and discoveries.

2.6. Literary sources

Information not available.

3. Research History

- 1960-1970 – researches along the Baba Vida fortress have been done. There is no information available, except some local newspaper articles and an old scheme plan in the archive of the Regional Historical Museum - Vidin. Tower No. 5 is found during the building of a school (today’s Professional High School of Tourism “Mihalaki Georgiev”). The bronze head of Emperor Nero, discovered by J. Atanasova in rescue excavations in the 1960s.
- 1988-89 – Tower No. 8 is found during the digging of foundations for an apartment building.
- 2014 – research was concentrated behind the inner part of the main fortress wall.
- 2016 – the goal of the field research was to establish and further archaeologically examine Tower No. 9 from the fortress system. Two non-destructive, complex geophysical methods were used – georadar area survey (GPR – Ground Penetrating Radar) with depth of measurement up to 5 m. and geolectrical tomography measurement with different depth of penetration, 6 to 9 m. The detected anomalous zones generally coincided with the area of the fortress wall marked in the old plans/schemes of the fortress. Especially around the catchment there were series of anomalies probably caused by the presence of a tower.

- 2018 – research was concentrated with a focus on the inside of Tower No. 8, which is one of the biggest ones in Bulgaria with diameter 25 m. The exact parameters cannot be established because part of it (its west side) is in a private property.
- 2020 – last confirmed discovery at the site (Oct. 2020) is the full Western Gate of ancient Bononia, the city’s main entrance during the Roman Age. The base of the gate was reached at almost 5 m depth.

4. Considerations for Touristic Exploitation

4.1. Practical Information

Closest urban community / city	Vidin
Ownership	50 % public 50 % private Since the remains are under the present city, they have various ownership status. The proposed research site is located on a public ownership (park).
Limits of use of or activities at the site (e.g. due to the presence of strategic complexes, factories, companies, military etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no
Access to the site (<i>multiple choices possible</i>)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> open to the public <input type="checkbox"/> controlled <input type="checkbox"/> entry fee <input type="checkbox"/> closed to the public <input type="checkbox"/> restricted (e.g. only on request, in summer time etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> others. Please describe:
Site connected to modern road network and public transport	Road network: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Parking available: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Public transport: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Further connected via: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bicycle routes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ship cruises <input type="checkbox"/> others. Please indicate: Please give a short itinerary: The Ancient city of Bononia is located 200 km northwest from the capital – Sofia, which is 3 and a half hours by

	car. The nearest airport is Sofia Airport. In normal circumstances, the public transport is available every day.
Tourist and visitor infrastructure available	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
Tourist and visitor infrastructure planned	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
If there is an entrance fee to the site, indicate prices.	N.A.

4.2. Presentation of the Site

Site visualisation, presentation and conservation on-site	<input type="checkbox"/> physical reconstructions for presentation <input type="checkbox"/> virtual reconstructions for presentation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> open air presentation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> protection structures for architectural remains <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum <input type="checkbox"/> information boards <input type="checkbox"/> audio guides <input type="checkbox"/> guided tours <input type="checkbox"/> others. Please describe: <p>The existing tourist infrastructure relates mainly to the Medieval Fortress of Baba Vida and some other historical buildings from various historical ages, e.g. Second Bulgarian kingdom, Ottoman Empire, etc. The Regional Museum of Vidin contains exhibition regarding the Roman heritage. Nevertheless, the Roman history is still not well presented.</p>
Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> souvenir shop <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> restaurant <input type="checkbox"/> others. Please describe:
Festivals and events held on-site in the past. Please list.	<p>„The Bridge Fest“ – art festival, happening since 2010 „БЪДИНЪ“ – medieval festival for Historical reenactments and traditional fire dances, happening since 2012 Opera at “Baba Vida” – music festival, located near the Ancient Fortress „The Blue Danube“ – international folklore music festival; first edition in Vidin – 2020</p> <p>There is no known festival related to the Roman heritage yet.</p>
Future festivals and events planned to be	<p>„The rhythms of Danube“ – authentic folklore dance festival, planned for June 2021 „Dances near Danube“ – international folklore dance festival, planned for June 2021 „The Bridge Fest“ – art festival, planned for July 2021 „Danube waves“ – music festival, planned for July 2021</p>

<p>organised on-site. Please list.</p>	<p>There is no known festival related to the Roman heritage yet.</p>
<p>Media appearance (please list past and upcoming TV/radio broadcasts, newspaper articles etc.)</p>	<p>https://europost.eu/en/a/view/city-hidden-under-a-city-26466 http://archaeologyinbulgaria.com/2020/10/13/archaeologists-discover-western-gate-of-ancient-roman-byzantine-fortress-bononia-in-bulgaria-danube-city-vidin/ http://archaeologyinbulgaria.com/2018/09/27/decagonal-roman-fortress-tower-from-ancient-bononia-uneearthed-in-bulgarias-danube-city-vidin http://niebg.net/dpal/node/13219 https://bnr.bg/vidin/post/101168085 https://bnr.bg/vidin/post/101349073/sredstva-za-arheologicheskite-razkopki-na-antichna-bononia-shte-otdeli-obshtina-vidin https://bnr.bg/vidin/post/101445620/10-arheologicheski-obekta-v-severozapadna-balgaria-kandidatstvat-da-badat-pod-egidata-na-unesko?fbclid=IwAR0JSPF5IQ3hPZrf9nr1Lghj2xag4yRC6GSYLnbsGQMpwojL7RCzh0TfRNE https://bnr.bg/radiobulgaria/post/100231959/vidin-edna-mnogovekovna-prikazka https://impressio.dir.bg/lyubopitno/otkriha-tsentralniya-vhod-na-rimskiya-grad-bononiya-ot-iv-vi-vek https://www.novinite.com/articles/162479/Bulgaria%27s+Bononia+is+Largest+Roman+Fort+Along+Lower+Danube+-+Expert http://vdcci.bg/kiosk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7:bononiya-i-ratziariya&catid=12:romanway&Itemid=125&lang=en http://www.europeonline-magazine.eu/widin-stadt_44797.html https://web.archive.org/web/20131206212356/http://bnr.bg/sites/de/Lifestyle/Geschichte/Pages/090212_A2.aspx https://www.pinterest.it/pin/370139663107485671/ https://dariknews.bg/regioni/vidin/antichna-bononiia-vyv-vidin-s-nominaciia-za-pametnik-ot-svetovnoto-kulturno-nasledstvo-na-iunesko-2265622 http://www.bta.bg/bg/c/BO/id/1863144 https://www.24chasa.bg/region/article/9127772 http://danubelimes-rob.eu/index.php/en/1en https://bntnews.bg/news/vav-vidin-arheolozi-prouchvat-antichna-bononiya-1077677news.html https://www.faktograf.bg/content/pokazvat-v-nacionalna-izlozhba-nahodki-otkriti-pri-stroitelstvoto-na-ptya-vidin-montana https://vidininfo.com/node/664 http://www.cross.bg/vidin-razkopki-bononiya-1420039.html#.YHAPb-gzbiU http://www.e79.eu/legend/bg/legends-bg/the-most-famous-legends-bg/item/38-legend-bononia.html http://vidinvest.com/2020/10/21/%D0%B1%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BE-%D1%81%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B4-</p>

	https://danubebridge2.com/2020/09/30/%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%85%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B1%D0%BE/ https://www.periscop.bg/vidin-se-prevrashata-v-turisticheski-tigar/ http://journals.uni-vt.bg/getarticle.aspx?aid=3425&type=.pdf
Social media appearance	Регионален исторически музей - Видин / Regional History Museum - Vidin - Posts Facebook https://www.facebook.com/%D0%91%D0%90%D0%91%D0%90-%D0%92%D0%98%D0%94%D0%90-110834075600605 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Bb-F_gs-xs https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5PhwB-lXm4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvS5zN1ltog https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLljX2mJgps&t=142s

5. Protection

Potential threats caused by nature and human	N.A.
Existing Cultural Property Protection (CPP) strategies and emergency plans	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no If yes, please list and describe them: Convention for the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage accepted on 4 of February 1974 in Bulgaria.
Existing cooperation with Emergency Responders (military, firefighters, civil protection etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no If yes, please list and describe them: No specific cooperation, but since the sites are located in the city, there is a fire station nearby and also a civil protection if needed.

6. Further Practical Information

6.1. International Cooperation

EU funded projects	No specific (site related) EU projects. Several general tourism related project with focus on the development of tourism.
Research projects	

International schools / camps	
Other types of partnership	

6.2. Information Relevant for Further Living Danube Limes Project Activities

Possibility to berth the LDL ship at the end of the project	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no If no, is there a “partner site” where the LDL ship can land in 2022? Which? The harbour of Vidin is located at walking distance. Preliminary talks for berthing of the ship have been lead.
Site accessibility for visitors 2020-2022	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> accessible <input type="checkbox"/> not accessible <input type="checkbox"/> not known
Site availability for public LDL events and project activities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no If no, is there a “partner site” where the LDL events can be hosted? Which?

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- Project "Legends for Tourism", 29/9/2012, <http://www.e79.eu/legend/en/>

8. Remarks

- The fact that the ruins of ancient Bononia have remained under the modern-day city of Vidin has rescued them from destruction by the numerous treasure hunters.
- Restoration and conservation of the ruins should be obtained because of the weather (humidity) and human negligence – surrounding the site with fence and signs, parts of the wall to be covered with geotextile for preservation during winter, and so on.
- The research and excavations will continue in the next 2-3 years, supported by the Ministry of Culture and Vidin Municipality. The main goal is to organize and present an archaeological park that will be the main attraction for future visitors. The Mayor of Vidin has vowed to change the urban plan of the city, so it can allow the exhibition of the newly found structures.
- Archaeological excavations will continue to dig deeper in the already examined area. They are also going to be undertaken in the area of the famous Vidin Synagogue since geophysical surveying has shown traces of ancient ruins there as well. The centre of the Roman Military Camp from I century is expected to be there. Excavations in other municipal plots are expected to be done, as in the area of the former military unit in present-day Vidin, where the northern wall of the fortress is located.
- The archaeological sites of Bononia and Ratiaria are part of the joint nomination of the Danube Roman Limes as a UNESCO World Heritage. Work is underway to prepare the application documents. In Bulgaria, the work is done by a team of archaeologists from the National Archaeological Institute, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences with Museum, and specialists from the Ministry of Culture. This is a common national cause keeping in mind the project is transnational and all the four countries – Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, and Serbia will have to submit their applications simultaneously.

9. Alternative Research Site: Sinagovtsi

Archaeological site near the village of Sinagovtsi (on the new E79 road in the section Vratsa-Montana-Vidin) was discovered by Dr. Zdravko Dimitrov, Associate Professor at the National Institute of Archaeology and Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Head of the excavations.

In 2020, 300 m east of the village of Sinagovtsi, a new settlement from the Roman era was discovered. This unknown and new site is registered on an area of 4,7 ha, next to Vidbol River (a tributary of the Danube), in the flood terrace of the river and 4 km from its confluence with the Danube.

Nowadays the terrain is flat due to the formation of fields for orchards, during socialism, and due to floods from the river, which formed sediments of 1,2-2,5 m.

The natural terrain in Antiquity and Middle Ages was quite different – strongly displaced in the direction of the riverbed.

As a result of preliminary research, were discovered archaeologically structures, cultural layers, materials and finds from six different periods:

- Late Bronze and Early Iron Age;
- Early Roman Era: I century BC – I century AD;
- Roman Imperial Era, principality: II-III century;
- Medieval Era: IX – X century;
- Christian necropolis, probably from the Ottoman period.

These layers include buildings from the Roman era, which are in a perfectly preserved condition. There are several kilns for ceramics and with household purposes. So far, five graves with a Christian burial ritual have been found, apparently part of a much larger necropolis.

The finds from 2020, which are about 200, are very impressive. These are coins from Roman Antiquity (denarii, sesterces, aces, etc.), ceramic vessels, brooches, silver earrings, other jewelry, a collective find of agricultural tools, and so on. Among the finds are rare for our lands denarii of Mark Antony and the Roman Republic from II-I century BC.