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Climate and geography

Momchilgrad Municipality is located in southern Bulgaria and occupies the southeastern parts of the Eastern Rhodopes. It falls in the central parts of Kardzhali region and has an area of 360 sq.m. Km. The municipality stretches between latitude 41° 53' N and 25° 42' East longitude along Greenwich. To the east it is bordered by the municipality of Krumovgrad, to the south – with the municipality of Kirkovo, to the west – with the municipality of Jebel and to the north by the municipality of Kardzhali.

The municipality is composed of 49 settlements, most of them with a population of less than 200 people, and one of the settlements is depopulated – Yunatsi. The population of the entire municipality is 16 263 people (as of 01.02.2011), with the center of the municipality of Sofia. Momchilgrad has a population of 7831 people. The second largest settlement is the village of Gruevo with 715 people, followed by Zvezdelle (491) and Nanovica (478).

The relief in momchilgrad municipality is mainly mountainous, with the municipality falling into the severely dismembered part of the Eastern Rhodope Steep Ridge, which is about 40 km long and between 15-22 km wide. The highest peaks in the area for Steep Ridge - 960 m., Zdravets (Dambali) – 910 m.b.c. In general, the region of the Eastern Rhodopes is characterized by relatively low altitude, with the hilly belt (200-600 m.p.) occupying 71.5% of the total territory, while on average the mountainous (1000-1600 m.c.) is represented at only 0.2% of the territory.

Occupying the eastern parts of the Rhodope Mountains, the climate in momchilgrad municipality falls within the transitional-Mediterranean climatic region and is characterized as moderate continental to Mediterranean. The area is under overwhelming Mediterranean climatic influence – especially with regard to Mediterranean cyclones. Moreover, thanks to its greater openness in the north during the winter half-year, the impact of cold continental air masses invading from the north is palpable. Active cyclone activity during the winter half-year is the reason for both the retention of a relatively high temperature level and an increase in rainfall, which for the most part are frontal in nature. The average January temperature is positive and varies between 1° and 2° C.

The distinguished climatic conditions are favorable for the thrive of a number of warm-loving annual crops and especially for high-quality tobacco varieties. On the other hand, according to the Bulgarian Geographic Atlas (2010), the possibilities for potential production of electricity from solar energy or the so-called average annual helioenergy potential for the municipality of Momchilgrad varies from satisfactory to moderate in the southern parts. Wind potential, in turn, is mostly satisfactory. The high temperature amount of the active growing season (3100-3500°C), as well as low temperatures in winter also provide good opportunities for growing perennial subtropical species outdoors.

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