

SITUATION REPORT #1

COVID-19



UNITED NATIONS
NORTH MACEDONIA

18 MARCH 2020

35 total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country.

4 health workers infected with COVID-19 cases, all from Debar.

1 patient fully recovered and released from hospital.

0 is the number of casualties associated with an infection of COVID-19 in North Macedonia.

KEY GOVERNMENT MEASURES AND RESPONSE



TRAVEL

- Suspension of travel to high and medium risk countries recommended;
- All border crossings closed for foreign citizens except for freight vehicles, diplomatic corps, foreigners with long-term stay permit and their family members, and others with special permission from the Ministry of Interior (MoI).
- Skopje International Airport to close for air traffic on 18 March 2020 until further notice except for state, military, medical and emergency flights.
- Travelers returning from COVID-19 affected areas, regardless of their residence status, are subject to mandatory 14-day self-isolation and should follow the standard procedure if symptoms occur.
- Travelers on official travel transiting the country should leave the territory within three hours.
- Emergency declared and quarantine imposed in Debar and Centar Zupa municipalities; all travel to these areas restricted.



ECONOMY

A set of economic measures adopted on 17 March 2020:

- export ban of wheat and wheat flour to all countries for indefinite period;
- assessment of wheat and flour stock in the country by the Ministries of Economy and Agriculture (MoE/A), Commodity Reserves Agency (CRA) and the milling industry;
- tracking and reporting of trade measures of other countries (MoFA);
- tracking and reporting of prices fluctuations, undertake with an extraordinary control of warehouses and distribution centers to make sure there are no hidden stocks of basic products (Market Inspectorate);
- report on the stock of all food products (CRA), prepare a list of food products that may require emergency import (MoE, MoA and CRA);
- abolish customs fees for critical products (wheat products, sunflower oil, sugar, sanitary products, masks, sanitary and medical uniforms etc.)
- freeze prices of basic products such as bread, sault, oil, milk and dairy products, eggs, flour, meat, pasta, medicines and disinfection at the level on the day when WHO declared pandemic outbreak (unless imported at higher prices).



EDUCATION

- All educational institutions are closed until further notice.
- One parent of children under the age of 10 allowed to stay at home for child care during the school closure.
- Ministry of Education and Science promoting online learning opportunities and education programmes through the national broadcaster and other means.



HEALTH

- Steering committee formed within the national crisis management system, composed of MoI, Ministry of Health (MoH), Transport and Communications (MoTC), Defense (MoD) and Foreign Affairs (MoFA) .
- MoH coordinating response through expert committees:
 1. Infectious Diseases Commission for technical advice to MoH
 2. International health regulations (IHR) multisectoral commission
 3. Operational Committee – Task Force for COVID-19
- All medical and health staff, and mechanical respirators from public and private health facilities mobilized on 15 March 2020.
- The University Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile States (Skopje) designated as reference and referral clinic for care of COVID-19 patients. Infectious diseases wards of Shtip, Veles and Gostivar and the facility in Demir Kapija designated as additional institutions for quarantine.
- Children's Hospital Kozle (Skopje) designated and prepared for child COVID-19 patients.
- North Macedonia Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP-Health) for immediate scale up of public health measures is being developed based on initial assessment of risks and vulnerabilities. The plan is currently being finalized and expected to be adopted by the Government in the coming days.

KEY GAPS IDENTIFIED AND EMERGING NEEDS

HEALTH

- CPRP-Health outlines critical public health measures for the period of 3 months and a caseload of 100 severe patients, identifying the following immediate needs:
- Supply of personal protection equipment (PPE) for the medical personnel, border and airport authorities;
 - Case investigation supplies – lab consumable kits;
 - Machines for mechanical invasive ventilation (respirators) and other case management medical equipment;
 - Trainings of target groups: medical staff not specialized for dealing with infectious diseases; risk communication and community engagement for media and community leaders and others;
 - Support in supplies and trainings for Red Cross and other volunteers assisting communities in high risk.

SOCIO - ECONOMIC IMPACT

The impact of COVID 19 is far-reaching, with the assessment of needs, required response and resources, particularly to assist the most vulnerable, ongoing.

KEY GAPS IDENTIFIED AND EMERGING NEEDS

The immediately observed economic consequences in North Macedonia include:

- Delayed and interrupted supply chains.
- Self-isolation and ban of social activities, affecting mainly micro and small companies in hospitality (cafes, restaurants, gyms) and services (small shops, bakeries) sector.
- Ban on travel, affecting tourism sector, transporters and seasonal workers. Between 40,000 and 100,000 workers from North Macedonia work as agricultural seasonal workers in Italy, and in construction and tourism in the Western Balkans and other European Countries.
- Self-isolation and caring responsibility, affecting manufacturers with some 161,000 employees, most of whom already organized work in additional shifts to avoid concentration of workers.

Psycho-social impact will be as challenging, with discrimination against people suspected to be infected or in self-isolation already on the rise, globally and locally. The impact will also be different for men and women, with the latter playing a disproportionate role in response to COVID-19 are more exposed to economic shock and violence in strained households.

UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

United Nations in North Macedonia is mounting its support to the situation through direct support to the Government, by adjusting regular activities and starting new.

Since January 2020, **World Health Organization (WHO)** has been providing day-to-day technical and policy advice to the government on COVID-19 containment and mitigation strategies, including through direct involvement in the preparedness and response activities (CPRP-Health); analysis of disease dynamics in the country; risk communication; increasing early warning, investigations and response and testing capacity of the Institute of Public Health; supporting health emergency management capacities; and providing expert advice to the Government and other partners.

International Organization for Migration (IOM) has helped with scaling up the COVID-19 readiness of transit and reception centers for asylum seekers and migrants through the provision of PPEs and regular disinfection of the facilities, in close cooperation with the Institute for Public Health. Medical assistance is also provided to the migrants.

IOM and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have jointly scaled up awareness raising on COVID-19 prevention and risks through information sessions and dissemination of materials to the persons of concern, which are available in multiple languages (Arabic, Dari, English, Farsi, Urdu, Pashtu, Roma, Russian) at locations such as Vizbegovo, Tabanovce, Gazi Baba, Shuto, Orizari etc. Further outreach activities are planned in the communities and through social media to raise awareness and to mitigate potential xenophobic verbal or attacks on migrants and refugees as “those who spread corona”.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has provided support to the authorities and the civil society in designing and implementing an emergency education programme aimed at helping school-aged children bridge the period of school closure due to COVID-19. As part of this initiative, UNICEF is mobilizing teachers in Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Bosnian and Serbian language to produce and air teaching content through an innovative show called TV-Classroom. Materials are being broadcasted via the National Television and through social media.

UNICEF is also working with teachers across the country in exploring opportunities and guidance on adapting additional on-line teaching platforms to start their own online classes and offering on-line education games and teaching material to support children's learning while they are at home, including through

UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

preparing and distributing web versions of proven teaching materials and offering new platforms to parents and children.

Recognising that school closures have an impact on children's continued learning and psycho-social wellbeing, UNICEF is developing online tools to help parents support continued learning at home; a list of digital learning platforms has been shared and a list of play based activities for pre-school and early primary school aged children, which will be published in the coming days.

UN agencies are jointly engaging in social mobilisation using digital communication channels and amplifying WHO risk communication material and developing content adjusted to specific target groups. In a joint effort, they are also tracking and responding to misinformation to ensure families know how to prevent 2019-nCoV and seek assistance.

UN Development Programme (UNDP) stands ready to provide food and water to citizens who were stranded on their return to the country and are due to arrive to the country from high risk regions in Italy and Austria and will have to be put in quarantine in Demir Kapija.

UN Women and partners are ensuring that gender dimension is integrated in COVID-19 response through gender analysis and disaggregation of data by sex; by advancing women's voice and decision-making in all aspects of preparedness and response; providing expertise to support risk communication and community engagement to reach women, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups; and continuing to focus on programming that builds women's economic resilience for this and future shocks..

Due to enhanced online exposure at a time of existential increased use of digital means, when so many are switched to a 'digital office', shopping online, joining online forums and webinars, there is a significantly increased risk for cyber criminality and **UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** is supporting authorities globally on addressing Cyber criminality.

UN Population Fund (UNFPA) is disseminating information for prevention from COVID-19 to pregnant women, sharing training resources to health workers at maternity wards and exploring options to support the vulnerable groups with hygiene items

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has initiated situation analysis on the negative impact of the crisis on the agriculture sector, which may be followed up with specific interventions. As there is no confirmation of the involvement of animals in the spread of the virus, FAO has also scaled up its communications on combating speculation and unclear associations with animals.

MAIN LINKS

Government

<https://vlada.mk/node/20488?ln=en-gb>

Ministry of health

<http://zdravstvo.gov.mk/korona-virus/>
<https://www.facebook.com/zdravstvomk/>

WHO North Macedonia

<https://www.facebook.com/WHOMKD>
<https://twitter.com/WHOMKD>

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

If symptoms (fever, tiredness, dry cough) occur, individuals should contact health care provider or the designated epidemiological contact telephones service and inform about their travel history and symptoms; they should not visit the health facility unless told to do so.

In case of symptoms and asymptomatic travelers

CPH Bitola	071 261 330	CPH Skopje	071 289 614
CPH Veles	071 219 278	CPH Strumica	072 235 543
CPH Gevgelija	078 545 444	CPH Tetovo	075 240 464
CPH Kochani	071 373 913	RU Gostivar	076 365 161
CPH Kumanovo	070 215 851	CPH Shtip	078 365 613
CPH Ohrid	070 723 029	IPH Skopje	078 387 194
CPH Prilep	076 475 747		

Psychological support

Parents of (pre)school children	072 912 676
Self-isolated adults	072 919 009
Citizens of Debar and Center Zhupa	070 241 807

General information

"Alo Doctor" Call Center	02 15 123
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