



COVID-19 in North Macedonia - Update 60

In **North Macedonia**, from **Feb 26** to **19 June 2020, 22:00pm CEST**, there have been **4,820 confirmed cases** of COVID-19 with **222 deaths**.

SUBJECT IN FOCUS: Preliminary results about dexamethasone use in treating critically ill COVID-19 patients

NORTH MACEDONIA COVID-19 [EPI SITUATION](#)

[EUROPE](#) and Balkan COVID-19 SITUATION

NORTH MACEDONIA COVID-19 [HEALTH RESPONSE](#)

NORTH MACEDONIA COVID-19 [SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT AND RESPONSE](#)

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[WEBEX SESSIONS](#) FOR THIS WEEK

NORTH MACEDONIA COVID-19 EPI SITUATION

Over the last 4 days – Data as of 19 June 2020 20:00

- **Total tests performed (% positive)** : 1227 (12.5%), 1348 (13.5%), 1391 (13.8%) and 1173 (11.4%) on Friday, Thursday, Wednesday and Tuesday, respectively.
- **Targeted screening tests (number positive)**: 126 (0)
- **New cases**: **664** (156, 182, 192 and 134 new cases registered on each day, respectively)
- **Recovered**: 140 COVID-19 patients
- **Fatalities**: 29 new COVID-19 deaths

Cumulative registered COVID-19 as of 19 June – **4820** – [see daily curve](#)

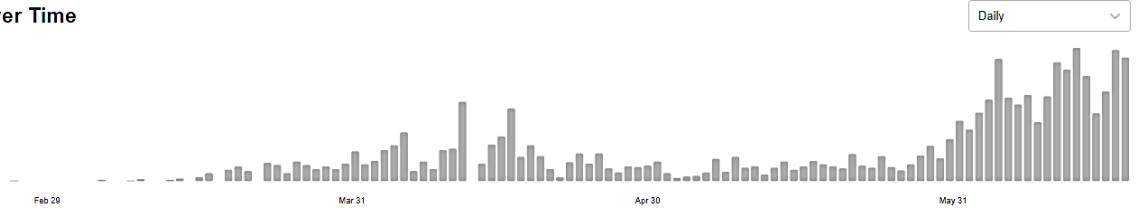
- **Cases among health workers**: **396** and one death case is registered.
- **Tests performed**: 49 020 SARS-CoV-2 tests. Daily testing capacity is from 800-1200 tests
- **Patients recovered**: 1863 COVID-19 patients.
- **Active cases**: 2735 COVID-19 cases in 27 cities
- **Fatalities**: **222** COVID-19 fatalities (CFR 4.6%) are registered.
- **Gender distribution**: More women are infected with coronavirus than men. However, **65% of all deaths are men**.
- **Comorbidity**: 76% of death cases
- **Age distribution**: **Median age at infection: 44 years**; largest number of cases is in >60-year: 20.5%; >60-year: 66% of all deaths; but the highest age specific incidence is registered in the age group of 50-59 years

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Figure 1. North Macedonia – Daily confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths (n=4664) and deaths (n=216) by 19 June 2020

Confirmed Cases Over Time

4,664
confirmed cases
Source: World Health Organization



Deaths Over Time

216
deaths
Source: World Health Organization

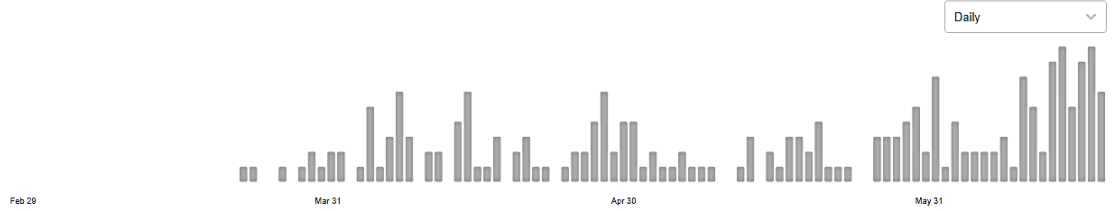
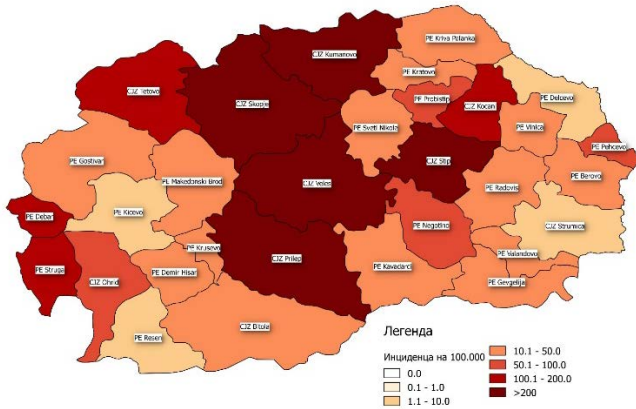


Figure 2. North Macedonia – COVID-19 incidence per 100,000 people, per city, as of 19 June 2020



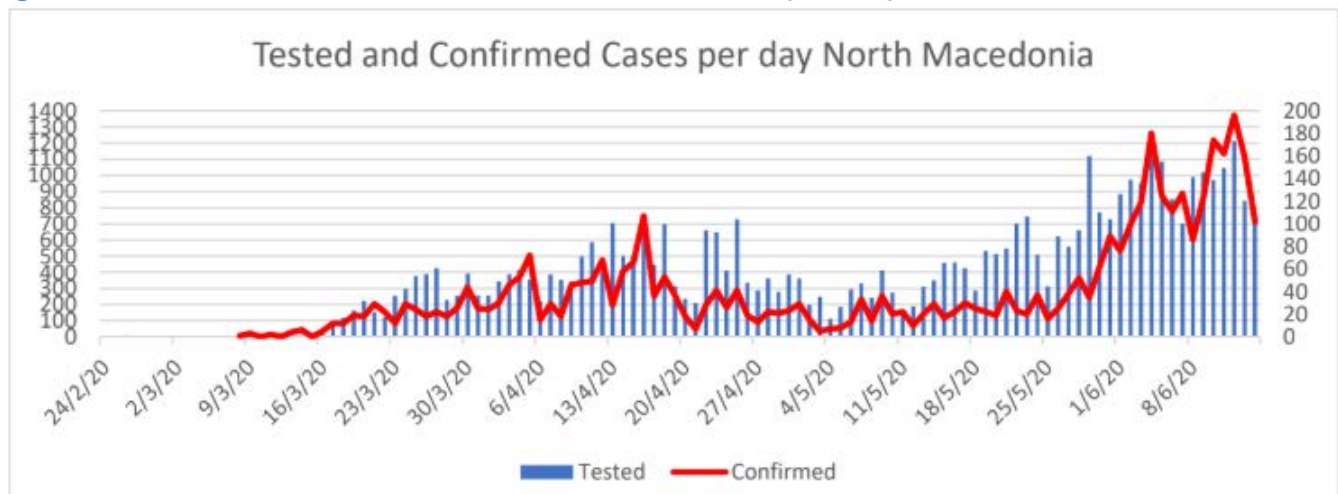
Geographic spread and deaths:

COVID-19 cases are registered in **32 cities**. The most affected city is **Skopje with 2342 cases (49%)**.

The highest cumulative incidence per 100,000 inhabitants is registered in **Shtip (493.6 / 100,000)**, **Kumanovo (468.2 / 100,000)**, **Skopje (379.2 / 100,000)**, **Resen (293.5 / 100,000)**, **Tetovo (250.8 / 100,000)**, **Prilep (241.3 / 100,000)**, **Veles (244.5 / 100,000)**, **Debar (227.0 / 100,000)** and **Struga (219.6 / 100,000)** while an incident rate with over 100 patients per 100,000 inhabitants was registered in **Ohrid, Kochani, and Pehchevo**. **64% of all deaths are registered in Skopje, Kumanovo and Tetovo**.

All data can be accessed at www.iph.mk




Figure 3. North Macedonia – COVID-19 statistics as of 16 June (n=4289)



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New cases are registered continually since Week 11 in 2020.

The highest number of new cases in a single day (n=196) was reported on 13 June, and the second highest number of new cases in a single day (n=193) was reported on 18 June.

-  % Change of 14-day Cumulative Death Incidence is ▲ 92 %
-  % Change of 14-day Cumulative COVID-19 Case Incidence is ▲ 187%
-  Effective Reproduction Number - 1.3 (1.1 – 1.5) Clusters phase

EUROPE COVID-19 SITUATION AS OF 19 JUNE 2020 IN LAST 7 DAYS; WWW.COVID19.WHO.INT

Over 8 million people around the world have contracted COVID-19, according to information available to WHO, and more than 430,000 have died. Globally the pandemic continues at an accelerated pace – more than 150 thousand new COVID-19 cases were reported to WHO yesterday, the most in a single day thus far.

In the European Region, with a stable but high overall incidence, an increasing number of countries are seeing significant increases in new cases, several of these are part of the Balkan, South Caucasus, and Central Asian Hubs.

Over the past 7 days, cumulative cases across the Region increased 5.6% to 2,495,895 cases (from 2,363,007 cases on 12 June) and cumulative deaths increased by 2% to 190,969 deaths (from 186,941 deaths on 12 June).

The 6 countries/territories with the highest 14-day cumulative per 100,000 are: Armenia, Sweden, Belarus, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia and the Russian Federation.

26 (of 54) countries have shown an increase in the number of new cases greater than 10% in the past two weeks including:

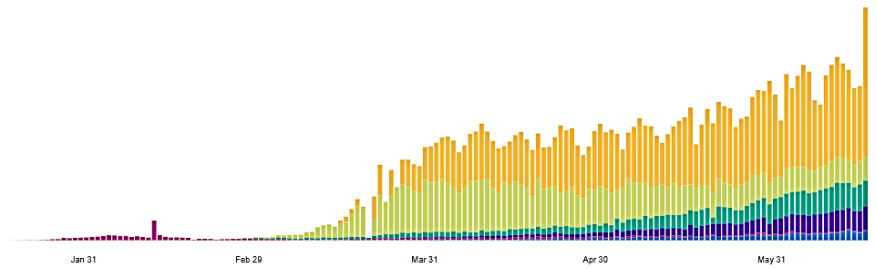
- >100% - Kosovo (426%), Bulgaria (411%), Greece (245%), Iceland (233%), Israel (196%), Slovenia (191%), North Macedonia (187%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (153%), Albania (123%), Croatia (120%)
- 40-99% - Uzbekistan (97%), Malta (78%), Moldova (77%), Azerbaijan (73%), Serbia (60%), Slovakia (50%), Ukraine (55%), Sweden (46%), Kyrgyzstan (46%),
- <40%-10% - Romania (37%), Luxembourg (36%), Switzerland (31%), Armenia (25%), Poland (22%), Portugal (22%), Turkey (20%)

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Figure 5: Comparison Epi curve of confirmed COVID-19, by date of report and WHO region through 19 June 2020 for all WHO Regions

Case Comparison
WHO Regions

Americas	4,092,526 confirmed cases
Europe	2,490,815 confirmed cases
Eastern Mediterranean	856,650 confirmed cases
South-East Asia	541,041 confirmed cases
Western Pacific	202,489 confirmed cases
Africa	201,178 confirmed cases



Source: World Health Organization

Globally	8 385 440 cases (142 451)	450 686deaths (5 151)
Africa	201 178 cases (6 639)	4 595 deaths (113)
Americas	4 092 526 cases (77 140)	212 517 deaths (3 526)
Eastern Mediterranean	856 650 cases (19 153)	19 041 deaths (466)
Europe	2 490 815 cases (19 033)	190 903 deaths (599)
South-East Asia	541 041 cases (19 459)	16 360 deaths (439)
Western Pacific	202 489 cases (1 027)	7 257 deaths (8)

*Remember to check the European Region Situation Dashboards available in both [ENGLISH](#) and [RUSSIAN](#) for the latest, verified information on the COVID-19 situation in the Region.

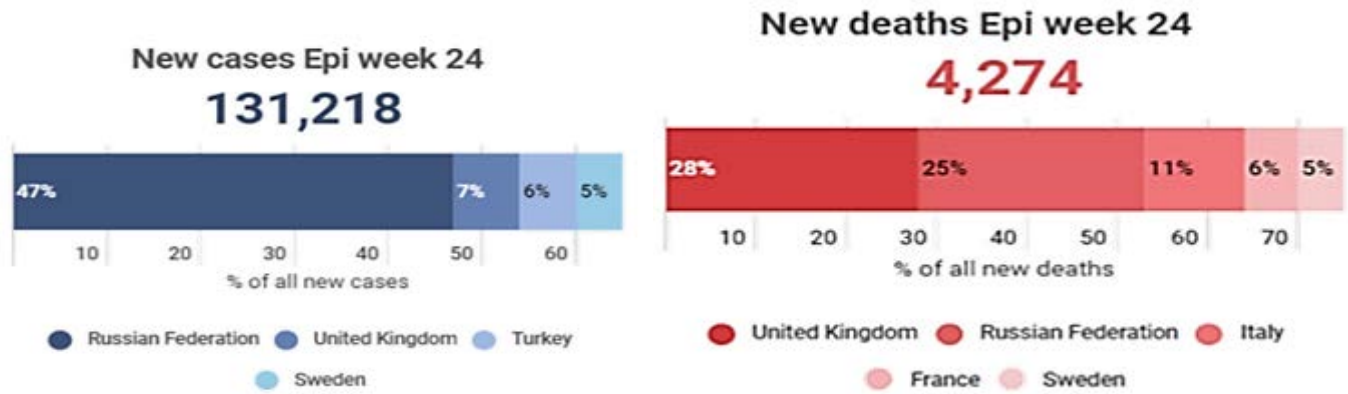
**Access a Mobile Friendly Version of the European Region COVID-19 Situation Dashboard [HERE](#)

COVID-19 weekly surveillance report Data for the week of 8 – 14 June 2020 (Epi week 24)

Case-based data reported to WHO as of Week 24:

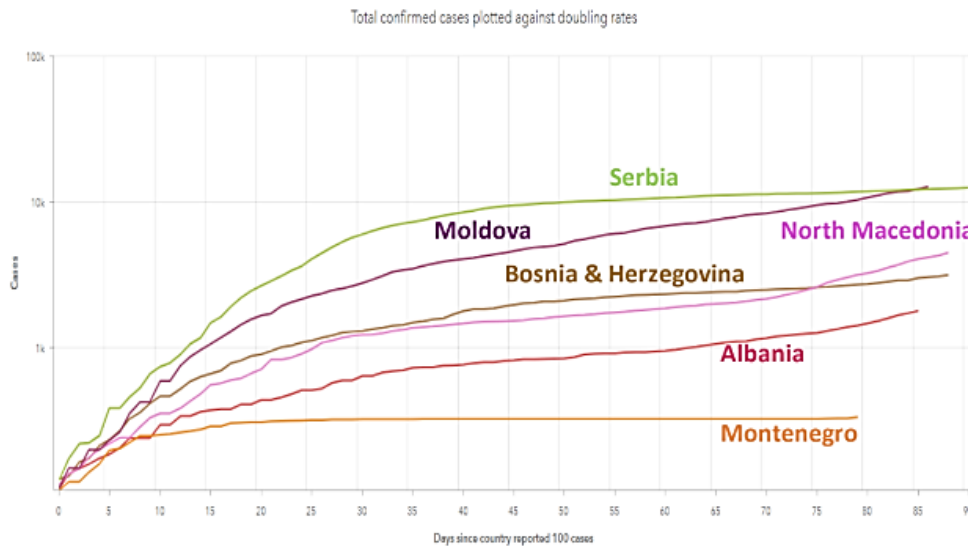
- Six countries had a crude incidence of ≥ 35 per 100,000 in week 24/2020: Armenia, Sweden, Belarus, Republic of Moldova, **North Macedonia** and the Russian Federation
- 65% of the cases reported in the past week were from the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, Turkey and Sweden
- 75% of the deaths reported in week 24 were from the United Kingdom, Russian Federation, Italy, France and Sweden
- 21% of all reported infections with information available were in health care workers
- 76% of all ICU admissions were in persons aged 50-79 years, with 70% of all ICU admissions in men

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Balkan Overview

Balkan Hub doubling rates:



COVID-19 began to spread among the Balkan Hub countries from mid-March.

A peak of cases was observed in mid-April and mid-June.

COVID-19 transmission in all countries has increased, with the exception on Montenegro, with a >45% increase in the number of new cases in the past two weeks. North Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina have seen the most significant increase in new cases in the past two weeks.

The doubling rates across the Balkan Hub signals that effective control measures must continue to be implemented.

- **Albania** has reported an increasing trend in new cases since the end of May following the adjustment of public health and social measures. Over the past two weeks there has been a significant increase in new cases (122%) at the same time there has been an **increasing trend in sample positivity from 7-22% from Weeks 23 to 24.**
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** has seen an increasing trend in new cases since the end of May with the highest number of new cases reported in 24 hours recently recorded on 15 June (109 cases). Concurrently there has been **decreasing trend in the number of daily tests conducted** and a slight uptick in the number of hospitalized cases. On 01 June, international airports opened for international flights
- **Serbia** has reported a slight increase in new cases since the beginning of June (45% over the past two weeks), although generally the overall trend remains stable. **Last week two large sporting events took place representing a significant epidemiological risk:** 1) football match attracted >15,000 fans, without any IPC measures in place; 2) a charity tennis tournament held in Belgrade, attracted several thousand spectators with limited observance of IPC measures.
- **North Macedonia** is reporting an increase in the number of new cases (214% increase in the past weeks) since the adjustment of public health measures in late May. There has been **increasing non-compliance and**

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public fatigue observed with regard to measures still in place. The forthcoming elections to be held in July pose a significant challenge to control the virus and reduce transmission. Strengthening of contact tracing capacities is needed, as on average 2 contacts per case have been traced thus far.

- **Republic of Moldova** has reported an increasing trend in new cases since mid-May with a significant increase in new cases within the past two weeks (76% increase). Cases are reported from 37 administrative territories including the Transnistria Region. **Healthcare worker infections are of concern, representing 16% of all cases**, with 12 deaths, as of 16 June. The Police and Army will now be more actively involved in monitoring public health measures in public spaces.
- **Montenegro** – after declaring the country to be COVID-19 following 0 cases reported since 04 May, **9 new cases have been reported since 14 June**, following the adjustment of public health and social measures. Active and effective contact tracing will be required to ensure these cases do not result in a larger resurgence.

COVID-19 Vaccine Development

Candidate vaccines:

- 138 potential vaccine candidates: 11 in clinical evaluation and 127 in the pre-clinical phase (as of 16 June).
- One vaccine candidate has entered phase 2b/3 clinical trials (ChAdOx1, Univ. of Oxford/AstraZeneca)

Planning (global):

- 11 June BioNTech SE signed an agreement with the European Investment Bank for EUR 100 million financing to support development and expand manufacturing capacity.
- 13 June: AstraZeneca signed deal with Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands to supply up to 400 million doses of vaccine (currently in phase 2b/3 trials) by the end of 2020. Similar agreements have been signed with Britain, the United States, CEPI and Gavi, for 700 million doses. A license also has been agreed with the Serum Institute of India for another 1 billion doses.
- 17 June: EC [published](#) its [European strategy](#) to accelerate the development, manufacturing and deployment of vaccines against COVID-19. It proposes a central procurement process for vaccines for all EU Member States.
- 18 June: WHO's Chief Scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan said she hoped there might be 2 billion doses of a vaccine available for vulnerable and priority health workers globally by end of 2021 and that WHO would propose how they might be distributed.

Planning (regional):

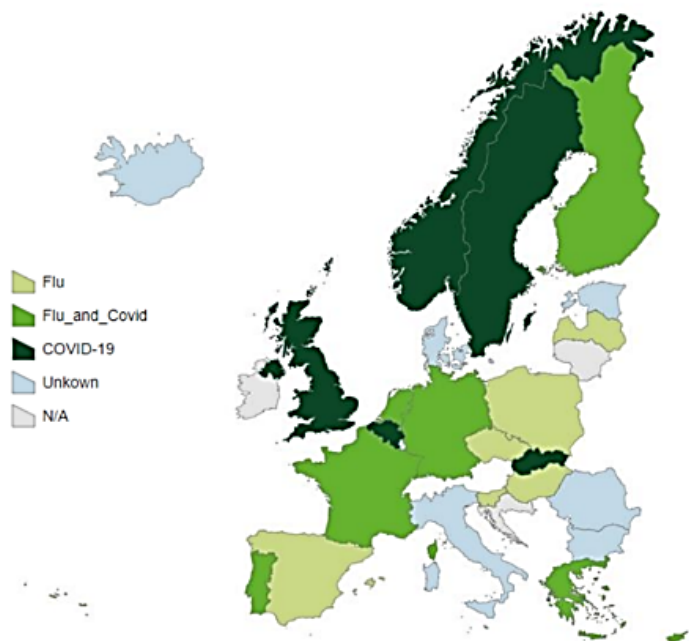
- Consultations to operationalize COVID-19 vaccine deployment in the European Region is ongoing
- Consultation with the European Technical Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization planned on 25 June.

Challenges:

- While international organizations, manufacturers and global leaders are calling for solidarity, agreements with manufacturers are being signed by some countries to secure hundreds of millions of doses. GAVI has secured 700 million doses.
- WHO is working on an allocation framework, but countries need to agree and come to a consensus for equitable distribution to make equitable access possible.

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ECDC Survey Results: Testing of specimen from sentinel sites as of 08 June



A) Changes in sentinel ILI/ARI surveillance in the community:

- Recommendation not to visit GP implemented in **76% (19/25)** of the countries
- Decreased ILI/ARI weekly reporting or testing of influenza in **72% (18/25)** of the countries
 - *surveillance has shifted towards an ARI surveillance, to establish a new sentinel surveillance of ARI in primary care*
- The algorithm for swabbing of sentinel patients for influenza remained constant in **76% (19/25)** of the countries, 8 countries test COVID-19 only

B) Hospital based surveillance

- Decreased testing of influenza in **64% (16/25)** of the countries
- 5 countries tested SARI samples for COVID-19 only

NORTH MACEDONIA COVID-19 HEALTH RESPONSE – in past 4 days

Test, Trace and Isolate

- Minister declared that Over 40 large clusters are registered in the past period on the entire territory of the country related to various family events where 50-150 people and in some cases 200 people were present.
- COVID-19 cases are confirmed in an additional textile factory in Shtip – so far cases are confirmed in eight textile factories in Shtip – and is been closed for a period of seven days. There are currently 450 people in isolation in Shtip.
- 41 employees in the Ministry of Interior are currently infected and 180 are in self-isolation.
- During the past 24 hours on the territory of the North Macedonia 274 persons were issued isolation orders, and 255 persons signed statements for self-isolation. Police officers conducted inspections of people in isolation and self-isolation, and it was determined that four people did not comply with the isolation measure. Also, 706 violations have been registered in relation to the measure for not wearing personal protection.
- Over 60 000 citizens have downloaded the StopKorona app so far.
- The private hospital Sistina is introducing home-based rapid serological SARS-CoV-2 testing. Mobile teams that will be collecting the samples will be available only in Skopje, every working day from 09:00-11:00. Patients will need to make an appointment one day in advance.

Risk Communication

- Health Minister urged **all political actors to respect the preventative measures and protocols during the entire election process**. He also urged all election-related activities to be tailored in line with the recommendations, expressing an expectation all political parties to agree on how to conduct the campaign and prioritize activities that will not endanger people's health.
- **The Head of the Islamic Religious Community** addressed the believers that the coronavirus is still here, and that the virus is dangerous and spreading rapidly and **urged the believers to respect the protection measures and recommendation of the experts**.

Public Health Measures

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- **The Government adopted the protocols for re-opening of hotels and other accommodation capacities around the country on 16 June 2020.**
 - Hotels will officially be re-opened on 22 June (Monday), with the recommendations for people to wear masks over their mouth and nose and to keep distance between each other of at least 2m.
 - Guests will have their shoes disinfected on the main entrance of the objects, and the number of guests allowed to be present at the same time in the dining halls will be limited.
 - Guests will be handed out flyers with recommendations how to avoid getting infected or transmit to other the virus.
 - Maximum two persons will be allowed per room, with exception of members of the same family or household, which will be allowed up to 4 in one room.
 - Disinfection products will be distributed in each room, as well as the hotel lobby, the dining hall etc.
 - Dispensers for drinking water or coffee or other beverages will be out of order.
- According to the Minister of Health, **it is too soon to open kindergartens** and the objective is to protect the elderly because children transmit the virus. The epidemiological situation is to be monitored in the upcoming period and then a decision will be made. In addition, in the upcoming period there will be intensive work on drafting protocols for schools, whether they will operate with a smaller number of pupils in classrooms or in two shifts etc.
- In the past 24 hours, the **Ministry of Interior (Moi) issued 702 isolation orders, while 210 people signed self-isolation statements.** Moreover, four people were caught ignoring stay-at-home orders during police controls. According to Moi, 705 people were caught without mandatory protective equipment, i.e. face masks.
- The names of people refusing to accept self-isolation orders will be made public today or tomorrow at the latest. Some 450 self-isolation orders are involved.
- **The Government adopted the Protocol for opening of the swimming pools to the swimming clubs only, not for recreational purposes.**
- **Election Process Protocol: The protocol consists of four parts, which cover the pre-election activities, the conduct of the campaign, the holding of party meetings and the day of the elections.** On election day, all members of election boards and observers must wear protective equipment, sit with open windows or ventilate the room frequently. There must be disinfectants at each polling station, and voters must be within two meters of each other and disinfected before entering the polls. They should remove the mask only for identification purposes, and after the voting they should disinfect their hands again. The protocol stipulates that there will never be more voters in the room than the number of ballot boxes. If there is a possibility, it is recommended to increase the voting time by two hours for major congestion to be avoided. In the pre-election period, it is recommended for party gatherings to be held outdoors and all activities to be held with respect to physical distance, mandatory wearing of a protective mask and mandatory frequent hand washing. It is recommended to take into account the number of participants, and the participants of the campaign "from door to door" to wear protective equipment and not to enter the households, but to go only to the door or in the yard. It is envisaged the mobile stands for advertising material not to have more than two citizens on one stand, and the party transport will take place with the means for public transport with a maximum of 50 percent of the capacity. In addition, it is mandatory to wear a protective mask, and carriers must provide disinfectants.
- **The Government amended the protocol of the operation of the hospitality facilities and the Protocol for operation of the cafeterias, upon a proposal from the Infectious Diseases Commission, and they will be open according to their regular hours, instead of up until 22:00.**

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- The Council of Inspectorates in the period from 10 June to 16 June performed 6,188 unannounced inspections in relation to acts adopted by the government to stem the spread of the coronavirus. The Head of the Council urged hotel owners to stick to the new protocols for work in order to avoid disciplinary measures like fines or even charges.
- **11 criminal charges filed in relation to the work of the hospitality facilities so far.** The most fines issued by the State Market Inspectorate concerning the work of hospitality facilities have been in the Municipalities of Gostivar and Tetovo. The fines are related to non-compliance with protocols, work after 10 pm, work in the internal part of the facilities, and unregistered facilities. Also, 24 catering facilities have been detected as working as unregistered taxpayers in Skopje, Tetovo, Kumanovo, and Stip.

Health Workforce

- **The entire health system is mobilized:** 54 medical doctors and nurses from all over the country are in Skopje to support the work of the 8 September Hospital and the Clinic for Infectious Disease
- Six doctors and 25 nurses are infected with SARS-CoV-2 in the 8 September Hospital. Additionally, two health workers in the Clinic for Infectious Diseases in Skopje are infected.

Physical Infrastructure

- The Government adopted a Decree allowing the private hospitals to hospitalize and treat COVID-19 patients. The private hospital “Zan Mitrev”, “Sistina” and “Remedika” will be involved in the treatment of COVID-19 patients.
- The installed hospital next to the Clinic for Infectious Disease is operational – 3 patients are currently hospitalized there and has a capacity of 75 beds in total.
- The Prilep General Hospital has received new equipment, the gynecology-obstetrics department and the first aid stations have been refurbished, and an emergency department has opened after a 15-year.

Case Management

- Over the past 24 hours, 7 patients are hospitalized at the Clinic for Infectious Diseases and the total number of patients is 95 – of which 47 are on oxygen support and no patients are on respirator. 20 new patients are hospitalized in the 8 September Hospital and the total number of patients is 121 – of which 7 are on respirator and 35 patients have severe clinical manifestation. 27 patients are hospitalized in the Clinical Hospital in Bitola and 22 in Shtip. In the infectious diseases departments in Tetovo, Ohrid, Veles, Kumanovo and Prilep 72 COVID-19 confirmed and suspected patients are hospitalized.
- The drug Dexamethasone is used in treatment of COVID-19 patients in the country.
- The COVID-19 hospitalization in the country is under 15 percent, other patients have mild symptoms and are treated at home, while the rest are asymptomatic cases.
- One-third of the death cases are admitted late to the hospital because of late seeking care by the individuals.
- Germany offered treatment of Macedonian COVID-19 patients in German hospitals.

Borders and Travel

- **The government has opened all border crossings in the country as of 17 June by applying current measures.** The measures such as providing valid negative PCR test upon entry into the country and mandatory self-isolation of 14 days remains in force. The 14-day state quarantine measure remains in force for all citizens or foreigners with regulated residence in the country, who when entering the territory of North Macedonia will not submit a valid PCR test or will submit an invalid PCR test.
- **During the weekend there will be a discussion about the complete opening of the borders** i.e. free flow of citizens without tests and isolation and the final decision is expected at the beginning of the next week.
- Although North Macedonia opened the border crossings, **there was no great interest in leaving the country** on Wednesday. There was no congestion on Tabanovce for entering the country either. However, those who decided to travel, in order to avoid the state quarantine, used the services of a private laboratory that tests for

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COVID-19. Several vehicles waited up to five hours to enter, as border guards questioned the credibility of the Austrian PCR test. Most, who stayed at the border for a maximum of ten minutes, were from neighboring countries, returning from work abroad and will have to exit the country within 5 hours.

NORTH MACEDONIA COVID-19 SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT AND RESPONSE

- The Government has officially put in function the website www.solidarnost.gov.mk of the **COVID-19 solidarity fund**, where citizens will be able to donate funds for the struggle against the COVID-19 epidemic. The web platform was created by the Finance Ministry, in cooperation with the International Republican Institute (IRI), USAID and the Healthcare Ministry. So far, the government received through donations over 200 million denars, money which will be used and is used for procurement of equipment for healthcare facilities around the country. The website also includes a list of all donators, both natural and legal entities, who have donated to the solidarity fund. So far over 1,000 citizens and over 130 have donated to the state for dealing with COVID-19.
- **The scope of people who are eligible to receive monetary compensation from the Government is expanded to include citizens who lost their jobs between March 11 and April 30**, regardless of whether they signed a consensual agreement for termination of employment or were fired by the employer and they will be able to receive monetary compensation from the Government for two months.
- The Government allocated a total of MKD 29.5 million for the **implementation of 40 projects related to COVID-19 by civil society associations and foundations**.
- **Young people ages 16-29 from low-income families will receive governmental financial support** to improve the standard pupils and students, strengthen purchasing power and develop IT skills. The Government will grant 3,000 denars each for procurement of school supplies (such as ones for writing, drawing, and sports footwear). Every regular student that is enrolled in the 2020/2021 school year in a public secondary school that is not over 16 when the regulation enters into force and that comes from a family household whose average monthly income in 2019 wasn't greater than the average wage per employee for March 2020 according to the state statistical office is eligible for the measure. . The government will provide vouchers for young people up to age of 29 for digital skills trainings. The platform www.digitalizriaise.mon.gov.mk will be used. The second measure concerns amount of up to 6,000 denars for university students from low-income families. It will be used to pay part of the tuition or for accommodation in a student dormitory or for private accommodation. According to the estimates, around 100,000 citizens will be covered
- **The National Annual Program for Public Health is amended** and additional funds in the amount of 22 million denars are allocated in the section for emergency and crisis situations to cover the activities implemented by the 10 Centers for Public Health during the period from the beginning of the crisis situation up to 20 May 2020.
- The Government adopted a Decree to reduce the financing of the political parties from 0.15% to 0.04% which amounts to about four million euros reduction in political parties financing.
- **Another 476 Interest-free loans are approved by Macedonian Development Bank** for companies that have applied for interest-free loans as part of the governmental measures for overcoming the economic consequences from the COVID-19 pandemic. With this, the number of companies seeking assistance through this measure reached 1,700, and from the government they inform that they will consider possibilities of increase of these funds, since many other companies have expressed interest to apply for the measure. So far, 738 loans were approved with the "Kovid 1" crediting line, estimated at around 5.54 million euros for companies with total number of 6,524 employees.

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- **Transparency:** According to the Index for transparency for 2020, implemented by the Center for Civil Communication, the Ministry of Health is ranked as “very good” in terms of its active transparency with 81.3 percentage points. Compared to the Index of 2019, there is an increase in 3.8 points from 77.5 percentage points. In three years, the Ministry of Health has seen a shift from “weak” to “very good” ranking, which is the highest category in the ranking and a record jump of 43 places. The overall active transparency of all 98 involved institutions (ministries, government and municipalities) for 2020 is 58.2% out of 100%. Active transparency is improved by 2.2% compared to the last years when it was 56%. This year, the highest ranked is the Ministry for Defense (97.9%), followed by eight municipalities, the first of which is Veles (94.4%).
- **The funds from the “Startup 2” are exhausted and the Fond for Technological Development will work to provide support to additional 21 companies.** A total of 53 companies are part of the first investment wave projected at 1.9 million euros of which 1.5 million were provided by the Government in cooperation with the World Bank and the remaining 400 000 will be provided by entrepreneurs.
- Surface of land planted with tobacco in Strumica is reduced by 20 % compared to 2019. In 2019, 2,700 contracts for purchasing of tobacco were signed with producers, but this year their number is barely 2,000. The total reduction of surfaces planted with tobacco is 1,200 hectares. On national level, the production of tobacco is expected to be around 23,000 tons, or 4,000 less than in 2019.
- The managers of the business entities assessed that the **confidence indicator in manufacturing industry** in May 2020, standing at 13.0, is 8.0 percentage points lower compared to May 2019. The situation with the current volume of production orders in May 2020 is less favorable compared to the previous month, the expectations for the production volume for the next three months are also less favorable, and the stocks of finished goods have decreased. The estimation of the economic situation is less satisfactory compared to the previous month, as well as compared to May 2019. The number of employees is expected to decrease. The average capacity utilization level of the business entities in May 2020 decreased to 65.4 % of normal utilization. The factors that had the greatest influence on limiting the production volume in May 2020 were insufficient foreign demand with 21.3%, shortage of skilled labor with 18.4 %, uncertainty of the economic environment with 14.6 % and insufficient domestic demand with 12.7 %.
- According to the data of the State Statistical Office, the **price index in agriculture in May 2020** decreased by 9.8 % in the group Input, while in the group Output it increased by 5.8 % in comparison with May of the previous year. In May 2020, compared with May 2019, the price index for Input 1 (goods currently consumed in agriculture) was 89.5, and the price index for Input 2 (investment in agriculture) was 100.2. In the group Output in May 2020, compared with May 2019, the price index of Crop production was 107.7 and the price index of Livestock production was 100.1.
- According to the Association for E-trade in Macedonia, the citizens spent almost 28.9 million euros on online shopping in the first quarter of 2020, of which 10.1 million in March only which is 61.5 % increase compared to the same period in 2019. Many of the e-shopping transactions that used to be directed at foreign shops in 2019, are now directed towards Macedonian businesses. Having this in mind, 59.4 % of the total transactions for e-shopping in the first quarter of 2020 ended up in Macedonian companies, while the rest in foreign ones.
- According to the latest reports of the National Bank of Macedonia (NBRM) the **COVID-19 crisis still has negative effects over the banking system.** Namely, after the interest rate of the treasury bills decreased in the past three months, NBRM decided to retain it on 1.5 % in May 2020. From NBRM they inform that the reduction of the interest rate of treasury bills maintained the liquidity of the banking system and the support of crediting processes in the economy. NBRM also registered increase of the foreign exchange reserves in May 2020 of around 600 million euros, adding that the trade deficit is expected to remain within the predicted limits. NBRM also registers annual increase of credits and deposits.

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- According to the data of the State Statistical Office, in 2019, the business entities engaged in construction activities completed construction works in the amount of 30.4 billion denars. Of that amount, 12.3 billion denars were for constructions in private ownership. During 2019, building activities were performed on 2,412 structures, and a total of 3,916 dwellings were completed, with total useful floor area of 258,328 m², of which all are in private ownership. The average useful floor area of the completed dwellings is 66.0 m². By regions, most construction activities were performed in the Skopje region, followed by East, South-West etc.
- A reward of 10 thousand denars for March, April and May this year are provided for the contribution and additional engagement of the employees of the Ministry of Defense and the members of the Army for overcoming the situation with COVID-19.
- Both deposits and crediting are on the rise. Total deposits are up by 7.8% on an annual basis, largely due to the increase in household deposits, while corporate loans registered a monthly growth of 3.3%, the National Bank said in a press release Friday. According to central bank data, total deposits have continued to rise on monthly level.
- Wizz Air plans to reduce its Skopje fleet from five to four aircraft as a result of the effects of the coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic and the opening of new bases across the continent.

SUPPORT TO NORTH MACEDONIA COVID-19 EMERGENCY

- The pharmaceutical company “Alkaloid”, in cooperation with the Swiss Embassy to Macedonia, the Faculty of Pharmacy at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University and the Medical High School Pance Karagjozov started the implementation of the project for trainings for laboratory technicians. In accordance with the measures against COVID-19, the theoretical part of the lessons will be conducted online in total duration of 45 hours, while trainees will spend another 30 hours in practical trainings in the laboratories of “Alkaloid”. This measure is implemented with support of the Swiss project “Education for Employment” which targets young people between 18 and 29 years of age, which are currently unemployed. The Swiss Agency “Helvetas” has provided funds of 500,000 denars, while “Alkaloid” will provide 3.7 million denars and “Alkaloid” announced that at least 15 of the candidates undergoing the trainings will be employed by “Alkaloid”.
- Nine respirators reserved by the UNDP in collaboration with Ministry of Health arrived and are distributed in nine hospitals in the country.

SUBJECT IN FOCUS: Preliminary results about dexamethasone use in treating critically ill COVID-19 patients

The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomes the initial clinical trial results from the United Kingdom (UK) that show dexamethasone, a corticosteroid, can be lifesaving for patients who are critically ill with COVID-19. For patients on ventilators, the treatment was shown to reduce mortality by about one third, and for patients requiring only oxygen, mortality was cut by about one fifth, according to preliminary findings shared with WHO.

The benefit was only seen in patients seriously ill with COVID-19, and was not observed in patients with milder disease.

“This is the first treatment to be shown to reduce mortality in patients with COVID-19 requiring oxygen or ventilator support,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. “This is great news and I congratulate the Government of the UK, the University of Oxford, and the many hospitals and patients in the UK who have contributed to this lifesaving scientific breakthrough.”

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Dexamethasone is a steroid that has been used since the 1960s to reduce inflammation in a range of conditions, including inflammatory disorders and certain cancers. It has been listed on the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines since 1977 in multiple formulations, and is currently off-patent and affordably available in most countries.

The researchers shared initial insights about the results of the trial with WHO, and we are looking forward to the full data analysis in the coming days. WHO will coordinate a meta-analysis to increase our overall understanding of this intervention. WHO clinical guidance will be updated to reflect how and when the drug should be used in COVID-19.

Today's news builds off the WHO Research & Development Blueprint meeting, which took place in Geneva in mid-February to accelerate health technologies for COVID-19, where further research into the use of steroids was highlighted as a priority. The findings reinforce the importance of large randomized control trials that produce actionable evidence. WHO will continue to work together with all partners to further develop lifesaving therapeutics and vaccines to tackle COVID-19 including under the umbrella of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator.

HIGHLIGHTS OF WHO NORTH MACEDONIA ACTION IN COVID-19 TIMES

- From 18-19 June, a virtual joint WHO/MOH technical mission took place to review the response of North Macedonia to COVID-19. A high level WHO mission is to be deployed 24-26 June in Skopje to provide insights on how to respond to the new wave situation.

WHAT IS [NEW]?

DG's Statement – WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 – 19 June can be accessed in full [Here](#). **Dr. Tedros'** key messages focused on:

- Tomorrow is World Refugee Day – an important moment to highlight the risks of COVID-19 for some of the world's most vulnerable people. Refugees are particularly at risk of COVID-19 because they often have limited access to adequate shelter, water, nutrition, sanitation, and health services.
- Over 80 per cent of the world's refugees and nearly all the world's internally displaced people are hosted in low- and middle-income countries.
- WHO is deeply concerned about the very real and present danger of widespread transmission of COVID-19 in refugee camps.
- Public health measures that reduce transmission of COVID-19 require strict and sustained implementation. This is difficult to achieve in refugee camps, where the public health situation is weak.

DG's Statement – WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 – 17 June can be accessed in full [Here](#). **Dr. Tedros'** key messages focused on:

- The WHO Academy is an important way of addressing these challenges, by revolutionizing health learning globally, while substantially increasing professional development opportunities for WHO staff.
- The Academy will contribute to improving the speed, efficiency and effectiveness with which information gets to health workers and empower health workers to accelerate advancements in medical care and practices to patients and communities.
- The Academy will also help to strengthen the capacity of Member States by “training the trainers” in how to implement WHO's norms and standards at country level.
- The Academy campus network will be comprised of a main hub in Lyon, France and six regional learning spokes will deliver high-quality, multi-lingual, hybrid and personalized digital learning.

RD's Statement – Preparing for the autumn is a priority now at the WHO Regional office for Europe on 18 June can be accessed in full [Here](#). **Dr Kluge's** key messages focused on:

- After weeks of cases declining in some countries, the number of new cases has now stabilized at around 17,000 to 20,000 cases per day across the European Region on average. However several countries continue to face increased incidence, while others are seeing an increase in numbers.

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- Covid-19 is still in a very active phase in many countries. It is crucial that we continue to recover and rebuild following lockdown, but it's also really important that authorities fully invest in having an aggressive track, test and trace surveillance system to avoid costly additional lockdowns in the weeks and months ahead should the virus rebound. The risk remains high across ALL countries.
- The pandemic threatens to jeopardize the achievement of most Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. In the European Region 68% of countries have reported that services to manage noncommunicable diseases have been disrupted due to the pandemic. 66% of services for hypertension management, and 58% of those to manage diabetes and its complications have been partially or completely disrupted.
- Preparing for the autumn and the upcoming influenza season is a priority now at the WHO Regional office for Europe.

Clinical management

- A WHO news story highlighting **Prevention and control of NCDs at core of COVID-19 response** has been published [Here](#). For people with noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, diabetes or cancer, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on their health, revealing how vulnerable they are. The Lancet recently published a paper highlighting the importance of NCDs and obesity-related conditions in the COVID-19 response ([Here](#)).
- **New** - A scientific brief on **Criteria for releasing COVID-19 patients from isolation** is now available [Here](#). This scientific brief provides the rationale for the changes made to the clinical management of COVID-19 guidance, based on recent scientific evidence. WHO will update these criteria as more information becomes available. For more information about clinical care of COVID-19 patients, see WHO's full guidance.

Surveillance

- The **COVID-19 surveillance report for the epi week 24** is now published on the WHO Euro website. It is accessible [Here](#) and on the COVID-19 site homepage: weekly surveillance report.
- **A website and app "Re-open EU" was launched yesterday by the European Union** and is available [Here](#). This interactive tool provides real-time data on travel restrictions and public health and safety measures in place to support the relaunch of travelling and tourism across EU countries. The information is frequently updated and available in 24 languages for your convenience. All information is from official government sources.

Vulnerable populations

- With the approach of World Refugee Day, a WHO news story was recently published in the **hope of refugees help tackle the COVID-19 pandemic** (available [Here](#)). As many countries in the WHO European Region still struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees and migrants are playing an important part in efforts to fight the coronavirus, supporting health systems and communities with their skills across the Region.
- A WHO news story on a **Refugee nurse Ahmed Ahmed: working together to prevent COVID-19 infections in Turkey** was recently published [Here](#).
- A brief looking at key actions in **addressing violence against children, women and older people during the covid-19 pandemic** was recently published (available [Here](#)). Several countries affected by COVID-19, have seen increases in levels of violence occurring in the home, including violence against children, intimate partner violence and violence against older people. Countries also face increasing challenges in maintaining support and care for survivors of violence. This brief compiles key actions that the health sector can undertake within a multisectoral response to prevent or mitigate interpersonal violence based on existing WHO guidance.

Supply chain

- The **Emergency Global Supply Chain System (COVID-19) catalogue** was recently published (available [Here](#)). The following catalogue lists all medical devices, including personal protective equipment, medical equipment, medical consumables, single use devices, laboratory and test-related devices that may be requested through the COVID-19 Supply Portal.

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- **Supply Chain Task Force notes for the record 9 June 2020** is available [Here](#).

Research and Development

- **New** - A WHO news story on **welcoming preliminary results about dexamethasone use in treating critically ill COVID-19 patients** is now available [Here](#). The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomes the initial clinical trial results from the United Kingdom (UK) that show dexamethasone, a corticosteroid, can be lifesaving for patients who are critically ill with COVID-19. For patients on ventilators, the treatment was shown to reduce mortality by about one third, and for patients requiring only oxygen, mortality was cut by about one fifth, according to preliminary findings shared with WHO.

COVID-19 and HIV

- **Key publications related to COVID-19 and HIV:**
 - Rights in the time of COVID-19 Lessons from HIV for an effective, community-led response.
 - Results of PLHIV needs assessment for access to services during the COVID-19 outbreak.
 - Applying key lessons learned in the AIDS response to COVID-19: selected practices from Eastern Europe and Central Asia
- The publications can also be accessed [Here](#).

Country Operations

- A **Joint report executive summary for the COVID-19 Rapid Response Team mission to Italy** was recently published [Here](#). A WHO Rapid Response Team (RRT) returned from the country on 4 March 2020 following a 10-day mission on the ground, conducted jointly with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The mission set out to better understand the situation and evolution of the outbreak in Italy and support the immediate national response. One WHO expert remained in Italy to continue to work with local authorities.

Other reports:

- A WWF report titled **COVID 19: URGENT CALL TO PROTECT PEOPLE AND NATURE** was recently published (available [Here](#)). In recent decades, people have increasingly encroached upon the natural world, resulting in escalating levels of contact between humans, livestock and wildlife. As a result, the frequency and number of new zoonotic diseases, originating in animals and transmitted to people, has risen drastically over the last century. Every year, around three to four new zoonotic diseases are emerging. These new diseases pose a grave threat to human health, causing deadly pandemics including HIV/AIDS, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and most recently COVID-19.

Journal Articles

- A research paper was recently published in the Lancet on **Global, regional, and national estimates of the population at increased risk of severe COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions in 2020: a modelling study** (available [Here](#)). The risk of severe COVID-19 if an individual becomes infected is known to be higher in older individuals and those with underlying health conditions. Understanding the number of individuals at increased risk of severe COVID-19 and how this varies between countries should inform the design of possible strategies to shield or vaccinate those at highest risk.
- A press release was recently published by Oxford University on **Low-cost dexamethasone reducing death by up to one third in hospitalized patients with severe respiratory complications of COVID-19** (available [Here](#)).

Other News

- The hydroxychloroquine arm of the Solidarity Trial, which seeks to find an effective COVID19 treatment, is being stopped. The decision is based on evidence from the Solidarity Trial, the UK's Recovery trial and a Cochrane review of other evidence on hydroxychloroquine. [Data shows that hydroxychloroquine does not result in the reduction of mortality of hospitalised COVID-19 patients](#), when compared with standard of care.

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WEBEX SESSIONS FOR THIS WEEK

Sports events and COVID-19: from lockdown to a new start**Thursday, 18 June from 14:00-15:00 Geneva**Please register [Here](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the life of all people everywhere. Over the past months, most sports events have been indefinitely postponed, as the risk of transmission associated with mass gatherings was deemed too high.

Today, an increasing number of countries are contemplating a return to normality in a post-peak/post-crisis scenario. Join colleagues from WHO headquarters, WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific and WHO Regional Office for Africa and experts from different sporting disciplines, associations and academia as they share experiences and insights.

A UNECE and WHO webinar on **Re-thinking urban transport and mobility in light of COVID-19: is it possible to turn a challenge into an opportunity?** is the third webinar of the series organized by our office on different aspects of the links between environment and health themes and COVID-19. This webinar will take place on **Wednesday 24 June from 11:00 – 12:30 pm CEST**. Find the flyer with the program attached and register [Here](#).

The WHO Regional Office for Europe and ECDC would like to invite you to a weekly laboratory workshop to discuss questions related to the COVID-19 virus laboratory work and to exchange information. The Laboratory Workshop depends on your interest and engagement, feel free to **ask your laboratory-related questions**. You are most welcome to propose subjects for discussion and send questions in advance to euinfluenza@who.int.

Laboratory Workshop: On Mondays, at 12:00 (noon) CET.

Agenda for Monday, 22 June 2020, 12:00 CET:

- Laboratory Assessment Tool for laboratories implementing COVID-19 testing.
 - Questions and answers
 - AOB

Please share the invitation below with all who might be interested in joining.

Join Zoom Meeting [Here](#) Meeting ID: 990 5009 6405 Password: **LABWRK20!**

Dial by your location +41 22 591 00 05 Switzerland +1 720 928 9299 US

Meeting ID: 990 5009 6405

Password: 559451

Global webinar on **Public Health Emergency Operations Centres (PHEOCs) for COVID 19 Response** which will be taking place Tuesday, 23 June at 14:00 CEST

This first webinar will focus on sharing knowledge and experience in developing and implementing Concept of Operations and Incident Management System in PHEOCs for COVID-19 response

Virtual event: the pre-conference of the **1st WHO infodemiology conference** on 29 June 2020. The open pre-conference will feature 7 inspiring talks on 'how infodemics affect the world and how it can be managed' which is followed by a closed scientific conference 30 June – 16 July in which we will frame the science behind managing infodemics. More information is available [HERE](#)