

SITUATION REPORT #3

COVID-19



UNITED NATIONS
NORTH MACEDONIA

28 MARCH 2020

241

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

2

is the age of the youngest patient infected.

3

patient fully recovered and released from hospital.

4

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

KEY GOVERNMENT MEASURES AND RESPONSE



TRAVEL

- All movement between 21:00 and 05:00hrs is prohibited across the entire territory of the country. This does not apply to people in need of emergency medical care. Elderly people (above 67 years of age) can move only from 05:00 until 11:00hrs, while the young (up until 18y) can move from 12:00 till 21:00hrs.
- Further restrictions introduced for weekends, starting 28 March, with movement prohibited from 16:00 until 05:00hrs.
- Restaurants, bars, clubs and casinos are closed for business as part of the anti-coronavirus measures. Gathering of groups of people of above five individuals in public spaces such as parks and city squares is also prohibited.
- All public transport to and inside the city of Kumanovo has been stopped. All shops inside malls, except food stores and supermarkets are closed as part of the increased measures to prevent further spreading of COVID-19 in the city.
- State of emergency has been declared across the whole territory of the country on 18 March for the period of 30 days. Debar and Centar Zhupa municipalities remain under quarantine, with all travel to these areas restricted and controlled by local authorities.
- Suspension of travel to high and medium risk countries remains in place [see the list [26 March 2020](#)] and Skopje International Airport remains closed for passengers, except for state, military, medical and emergency flights.
- As of 16 March, only citizens of North Macedonia are allowed entry into country. The following categories of foreign citizens are exempt from this restriction: foreign citizens with permanent, long-term stay residence permits and their family members; freight vehicle personnel; diplomatic corps representatives; and others with special permission from the Ministry of Interior (Mol).
- Travelers on official travel transiting through North Macedonia should leave the territory within three hours.
- Border crossings of neighbouring countries are closed.
- Travelers returning from COVID-19 affected areas, regardless of their residence status, are subject to mandatory 14-day quarantine and should follow the standard procedure if symptoms occur.



HEALTH

- National response is led the steering committee formed within the national crisis management system, composed of Mol, Ministry of Health (MoH), Transport and Communications (MoTC), Defense (MoD) and Foreign Affairs (MoFA).
- Three expert committees further support the response: Infectious Diseases Commission, providing technical advice to MoH International health regulations (IHR) multisectoral commission; Operational Committee – Task Force for

COVID-19.

- All medical and health staff and mechanical respirators from public and private health facilities have been mobilized.
- The University Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile States (Skopje) is 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.
- General Hospital 8th September in Skopje treats suspected or confirmed COVID19 patients with additional medical pathologies requiring additional care.
- Treatment algorithms for general practitioners are being distributed via "Moj Termin" with a short info-list for classification and management of suspected cases for COVID-19.
- MoH has initiated a systematic testing strategy and set 14 COVID-19 screening and testing points countrywide with the support of the private doctors' association.
- MoH and Institute of Public health are implementing vigorous risk communication campaign on all available channels.
- North Macedonia has joined the global WHO Solidarity Study for COVID19 case management.
- The Agency for Drugs and Medical Devices (MALMED) approved the combined treatment for COVID-19: Chloroquine and Azithromycin.
- The private health care institutions having intensive care and treatment units will provide services for COVID-19 patients under an agreement with health insurance fund.
- Mobile COVID-19 testing to be introduced to improve the access to testing services and to reach high risk communities.
- The Government reviewed and adopted the information related to the management of potentially COVID-19 contaminated medical waste, including the waste in quarantine and self-isolation sites.
- The Government has, together with the assistance of the World Health Organization (WHO), developed the health segment of the Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) for immediate scale up of public health measures. The plan is currently revised to ensure adequate capacity for treatment, prevention and other health interventions across eight pillars.

For more information on the health response and epidemiological situation see WHO Flash Updates:

18 March 2020	19 March 2020	20 March 2020
21 March 2020	22 March 2020	25 March 2020

KEY GOVERNMENT MEASURES AND RESPONSE



ECONOMY

The strongest economic shock is expected in Q2 2020; potential stabilization in Q3 and rebound of growth in Q4 (MoF).

Economic measures to curb the impact of COVID-19 adopted as of 25 March:

- Export ban of wheat and wheat flour to all countries for indefinite period;
 - Assessing wheat and flour stock in the country and potential needs for emergency import of critical products;
 - Tracking and reporting of export-import measures of other countries;
 - Tracking and reporting of prices fluctuations, with an extraordinary control of warehouses and distribution centers to make sure there are no hidden stocks of basic products;
 - Abolish all customs fees for critical products (wheat products, sunflower oil, sugar, sanitary products, masks, sanitary and medical uniforms, expandable medical material etc.)
 - Freeze prices of basic nutrition products, medicines, expandable medical and disinfection materials (same freeze applies to the profit margin for products imported at higher prices).
 - Initial €5.7M (MKD 355M) for loans to micro, small and medium companies through the Development Bank of North Macedonia with stand-by period of 6 months, repayment period of 2 years, quarterly repayments and 0% interest rate – available from today;
 - €16.26M (MKD 1B) to subsidize 50% of the employment contributions for the workers in transport, tourism, hospitality and other affected sectors, aimed at to safeguarding jobs.
 - Canceling advance VAT payments for three months (April-June) for most affected companies, to facilitate liquidity problems;
 - Canceling personal income tax and profit tax payments for three months (March-April) in hospitality, tourism and transport sector and other affected companies with min 40% profit decrease conditional to saving jobs
 - Reducing some of the parafiscal fees, e.g. 50% decrease of the general penalty fee (for delayed payments); penalty fee for delays in public duties and for tax payments. Further these fees will be set at monthly basis.
 - Proposal to transfer all available funding (€1.2M) for support of tourism, which is one of the most affected sectors employing some 70,000 people, to Tourism Fund.
- The Government has also amended the legislation to facilitate and/or streamline administrative procedures during the state of emergency, including:
- Postponing all due bankruptcy procedures;
 - Freezing time count for legal deadlines during the state of emergency within administrative proceedings and for renting state agricultural land;
 - Ensuring education continuity through electronic/digital ways of teaching and assessment of learning outcomes;
 - Postponing public enforcement (forced collection of debts) until 30 June;
 - Allowing more flexibility in the budget and public debt management (e.g. possibility to reallocate and decrease allocations up to 70%);
 - Operationalizing National Bank's measures to facilitate credit conditions for companies and citizens;
 - Extending deadlines for shareholding companies' functioning (e.g. convening shareholders assembly).
- Measures announced by the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia, in cooperation with the Banks' Association, to boost credit activity and facilitate credit conditions for companies and citizens:
- Reduced key interest rate by 0.25% to 1.75%.
 - Reduced mandatory reserves for new or reprogrammed loans to most

affected companies.

- Regulatory easing for credit risk management (150 instead of 90 days for dysfunctional loan classification).
- Abolished fees for withdrawing and returning cash to the central vault.

KEY GAPS IDENTIFIED AND EMERGING NEEDS



EDUCATION

- All educational institutions remain closed until further notice.
- One parent of children under the age of 10 allowed to stay at home for childcare during the school closure.
- Ministry of Education and Science promoting online learning opportunities and education programmes through the national broadcaster and other means.
- UNICEF supported National Digital Platform was launched as a new tool to support continuing remote learning. The platform is a one-stop-shop for sharing online lessons prepared by teachers. Over 600 teachers expressed interest and in two days there are almost 300 online lessons which are being uploaded on the platform.
- The E-classroom that was built on the UNICEF supported [Eduino online learning platform](#) was launched on March 23. In just two days after launching, the platform was visited by 160,000 users. After the great success and interest in the video lessons for primary education, preparations are ongoing for expanding E-classroom with [video lessons](#) for pre-primary and secondary education.
- TV-classroom is ongoing and this week apart from classes for preschool it was expanded with classes for all primary education grades from 1 to 9, in all languages of instruction Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Serbian and Bosnian.

HEALTH

To ensure continuous operation of critical public health measures for the period of 3 months, the following immediate needs and areas of concern have been identified:

- Inadequate supply of personal protection equipment (PPE) for medical personnel, border and airport authorities; of case investigation supplies – lab consumable kits; and machines for mechanical invasive ventilation (respirators) and other case management medical equipment. Per conservative preliminary estimates at least \$11 million in additional and currently unavailable resources would be required to meet the urgent immediate demand for the procurement of medical equipment and supplies.
- Overcoming procurement challenges as most supplies are unavailable locally and access to international procurement channels is hampered by logistical constraints and international shortages due to high demand.
- 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 environments;
- Shortage in health workforce;
- Mental health of the elderly and disabled due to prolonged self-isolation;
- Community support and health related outreach activities for the vulnerable;
- Limited compliance of citizens with the instructions to restrict movement.

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.

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.
- Transport restrictions and quarantine measures are likely to hinder farmers' access to markets
- Restrictions of movement may impede farmers from farming and food processors from processing. Smallholder farmers are particularly vulnerable.
- As a net importer of food and basic agricultural inputs for food production, the country may face challenges to food security due to shortage of animal feed, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, veterinary medicines and other core inputs that could affect agricultural production.
- Production downfalls in the agriculture regions in quarantine, such as currently Debar, Centar Zupa and Kumanovo (affecting more than 20,000 hectares of farmland, more than 10,000 farmers, nearly 50,000 sheep, and close to 10,000 dairy cows) may cause economic shocks and food shortages in the intermediate and long-term periods.

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 collectively supporting the Government and international partners with the procurement of urgent medical and protective supplies and equipment for immediate response. In addition to that, UN agencies, funds and programmes are conducting the following activities or adjusting their work to support response:

WHO has supported MoH with estimating the critical needs and required supplies for the next three months for the health sector and has coordinated with partners to identify other health needs. WHO continues to provide protective equipment in support of the national virology lab and clinics; and support the national virology lab with essential medical kits and reagents necessary to respond to the COVID 19 emergency. In order to keep the health system abreast with new developments, WHO online training on COVID19 for medical staff and ICP has been translated into Macedonian language (<https://openwho.org/>) and is disseminated to all health workers via the e-health system "Moj Termin."

To continue to maintain direct contact with refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness, taking into consideration the

limitations of contact for its staff imposed by the COVID-19 epidemic, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has introduced a hotline to be administered by professional UNHCR staff.

In order to support the authorities to inform persons under UNHCR's mandate about how to stay safe from COVID-19 in their language, UNHCR provided World Health Organization materials in Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Urdu, Pashtu, English, Spanish, Russian, Turkish, and local languages Macedonian, Albanian and Roma, which have been displayed at the Reception Centre for asylum-seekers in Vizbegovo, Reception and Transit Centres Vinoguj and Tabanovce, Border Police Station in Gevgelija, Reception Centre for Foreigners in Gazi Baba, and the office of the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association in Shuto Orizari.

International Labour Organization (ILO) has provided the Government, Employers' Organizations and Trade Unions with assessment of possible scenarios, examples of measures and guidelines on mitigating the COVID-19 effects to the world of work. ILO is prepared to undertake country assessment of the labour market in the aftermath of COVID-19.

United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) supports the University Clinic of Psychiatry to provide psychosocial support and counselling to children and caregivers impacted by COVID-19. The helpline 078 378 728 for adolescents and their parents and the helpline 070 291 574 for parents of children with disabilities will operate between 9:00 and 16:00 every working day. The helpline 072 912 676 for children at school age and parents of preschool and school age children will operate between 9:00 and 19:00 every working day. All will be free for all parents and children who need support UNICEF is working with the experts from the University Psychiatric Clinic to make available informative videos, Q&A sessions and podcasts to help parents and children better cope with anxiety and fear due to COVID 19 and focus on their wellbeing.

UNICEF will also support the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Justice and the Centres for Social Work to plan and develop mechanisms to reach children and families with specific needs (such as children on the streets and their families; children in state care, children in correctional facilities, children with disabilities, children on the move) to make sure they receive prompt information and guidance, stay isolated, and have sufficient hygienic and food supplies.

UNICEF continues in social mobilisation using digital communication channels - this week focusing on continued learning using the hashtag #LearnAtHome and promotion of the E-Classroom initiative. The #LearningAtHome campaign will continue through the next couple of weeks to ensure children develop a routine for learning — an important strategy to maintain self-isolation and maintain a sense of normalcy. Preparations are also underway on a campaign to support emotional wellbeing and promotion of newly established helplines.

Building on the UNICEF volunteer initiative, UNICEF will be organising a digital design thinking workshop with youth volunteers to develop an online volunteer programme, focused on positive messaging and community support

UN Development Programme (UNDP) is working on community engagement of over 180 trained unemployed people, previously engaged through Community Works Programme for provision of services to elderly and persons with disability. Services will be initially limited to provision of necessary products & medicines, but could also be extended to other services. Safety training will be

UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

organized in cooperation with WHO with all participants before this activity starts in order to prepare people involved with COVID-19. Personal protection equipment will be provided to all engaged persons. Simple mobile app will be designed for easy communication with end-beneficiaries and local coordinators. UNDP is also supporting farmers and producers of fruits and vegetables to deal with the constraints imposed by COVID-19, by enabling contractual farming, providing access to drying facility, assistance with packaging, transport and placement.

To alleviate the situation imposed by COVID-19 for the economy and especially for heavy hit sectors such as the textile and the construction industry, UNDP is hiring two consultants that will map the existing gaps and propose IT solutions that can help maintain the number of employees. Based on new trends emerging globally, the consultants will also propose models for future jobs, flexible working hours and working arrangement as mechanisms to improve business performances in the current period.

UNDP will also examine possibilities for provision of post-secondary education by development of training programs through e-platforms, that will be adapted to adult learning needs, adjusted to the work of the private sector and beneficial for workers who need to upgrade their skills and move into higher quality jobs.

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.

As **UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** specialty is in procurement, UNOPS Procurement have established a database of suppliers and a network that can be used of for the health items in high demand such as PPE (masks, gloves, aprons etc). UNOPS has also approved a blanket Emergency Procurement Procedure (EPP), which includes high demand items.

UN Population Fund (UNFPA) is procuring sanitary items for the health facilities in managing and prevention of COVID-19 cases, focusing on the needs of women, pregnant women and elderly. UNFPA intends to translate WHO online training into Albanian language, to become a mandatory training for health professionals, including those in maternities, as part of the e-health system "Moj Termin". It will also distribute sanitary items for most in need vulnerable groups, such as elderly, persons with disabilities and women affected by COVID.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) has supported the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy to assess the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the food and agriculture sector and the specific interventions necessary to keep food supply chains alive, protect the most vulnerable and mitigate the pandemic's impacts across the food system. FAO has an up to date [website](#) dedicated to Covid-19, while a special [Q&A section](#) COVID-19 pandemic – impact on food and agriculture is also available and is currently being localized in Macedonian language.

The **COVID-19 Partnership Platform** – a global web platform to support coordination and transparency of national needs and international partners support for Covid19 response has been developed. The North Macedonia Country Page within this platform is currently being populated with data and will soon be available for your inputs.

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/>

Institute of public health

www.iph.mk

WHO North Macedonia

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

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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