

SITUATION REPORT #7

COVID-19



UNITED NATIONS
NORTH MACEDONIA

22 APRIL 2020

1,259

confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country.

4

 months.

the age of the youngest patient.

272

fully recovered patients.

56

deaths associated with COVID-19.

KEY GOVERNMENT MEASURES AND RESPONSE



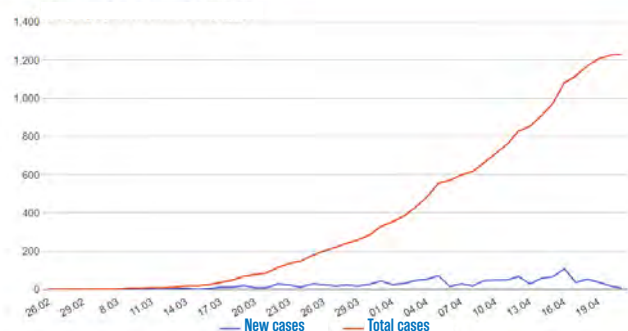
TRAVEL

- State of emergency is in force across the entire territory of the country.
- All movement is prohibited between 19:00 and 05:00hrs during weekdays across the entire territory of the country, with further restrictions for elderly people and youth up to age 18. During weekends, movement is prohibited from 15:00hrs on Saturday until 05:00 on Monday.
- Mandatory use of masks, scarfs, shawls or similar piece of clothing to cover the mouth and nose at all enclosed public spaces such as markets, pharmacies, banks etc. has been introduced as of 22 April 2020. The same is applied on open spaces in situations when those areas are crowded.
- Restaurants, bars, clubs and casinos remain closed for business. Gathering of groups of more than two people in public spaces is prohibited, excluding for parents of children up to age 14.
- All public transport to and from the cities of Kumanovo and Tetovo has been stopped.
- International travel to and from country is severely limited due to imposed measures within North Macedonia and in other countries.
- Travelers returning from COVID-19 affected areas, regardless of their residence status, are subject to mandatory 21-day quarantine.



HEALTH

LATEST STATISTICS



- MoH has initiated systematic testing and set up COVID-19 screening and testing points countrywide with the support of the private doctors' association. Laboratory capacities for testing have been gradually increasing. Mobile testing teams, designated primarily for elderly and high-risk communities, have been deployed.
- Every evening, the Institute of Public Health publishes a detailed epidemiological

report at www.iph.mk

- The gaps and needs related to the public health response, identified by the Government with the assistance of WHO and based on the rapid assessment of the relevant country mechanisms and response structures, have been estimated at approximately \$31 million over the period of three months.
- All official documents for the Solidarity trial have been approved by Malmel, the national regulatory authority, to allow to proceed with drugs procurement. The trial will compare four treatment options against local standard of care, to assess their relative effectiveness against COVID-19.
- All patients from the Hospital in Kumanovo have been transferred to the Clinic for Infectious Diseases in Skopje since the number of health professionals in the hospital in Kumanovo has decreased as many of them are in self-isolation. The infectious disease department in the hospital will function as triage point where for assessment of the health status and decisions about referrals will be made.
- MoH announced plans to implement mass screening of different groups of the population to see the percent of people exposed to COVID-19 once the situation calms down.

For more information on the health response and epidemiological situation see WHO Flash Updates available at: <https://un.mk/reports/>



ECONOMY

The Ministry of Finance informed about the plans to issue another Eurobond, which is a change of the previously announced plan to use the Bridge-To-Bond facility. The amount will probably exceed the initially planned €400 million. Stimulus for companies to preserve liquidity and jobs

- Despite decreasing revenues, the Government managed to increase the return of VAT by 20% by mid-April compared to the data reported earlier ;
- Starting from 18 April, 2019 subsidies in amount of about € 30 million were disbursed to 19,050 tobacco growers through facilitated electronic transfers funds.
- The second package of interest-free loans was approved for an additional 118 companies with 1,116 employees in amount of €936,600. This makes a total disbursement of €2.3 million out of the available €5.7 million, predominantly to micro and small companies.
- Secured full payment of service-based contracts in public institutions for unemployed and 50% (but up to MKD 30,000) payment for employed persons, except those engaged by foreign donors or multilateral agreements, who will receive full payment.

KEY GOVERNMENT MEASURES AND RESPONSE

Mobilizing and rationalizing resources

- Excise increase of the Euro-super (95 and 98), Euro-diesel and the extra-light fuel oil for MKD 3 to counterbalance the drop of excise revenues during the period of economic crisis. The increase is temporary and set to adjust to the oil market prices.
- Submit a request to the European Union for macro-financial support to non-EU members;
- Submit a request to the World Bank for a loan in support of COVID-19 response;
- Facilitate the procedure for donations for COVID-19 response, including by exempting from VAT payments for the amount of donations made for COVID-19 response
- Reduce April and May salaries of diplomats (ambassadors and consuls) for 20% compared to March.

Regulatory easing

- Extend the (finalizing) contracts for health workers for the period of emergency and temporary freeze of retirement procedures;
- Extend the deadline for annual rent of agricultural land;
- Define the operating conditions in public transport and retail stores to secure the minimum distance between the customers;
- Extend the deadlines for contractual obligations within concession agreements;
- Temporarily cancel the ongoing enforcement procedures to allow for undisturbed use of salaries and other COVID-19 mitigation measures;
- Call on the public institutions to reprogram citizens' debts and write-off interest payments;
- Extend child allowances that require regular condition check for the period of emergency, in order to avoid unnecessary social contacts;
- Extend the operating license for insertion of oil and gas devices.



EDUCATION

- All educational institutions remain closed until further notice.
- One parent of children under the age of 10, and a parent of children with disabilities (regardless of age) allowed to stay at home for childcare during the school closure
- Parents of children with disabilities (regardless of age) also 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](#) which is one-stop-shop for sharing online lessons, currently offers 500 lessons for primary school children. The platform is expanding to also include video lessons prepared by teachers for children in pre-primary, secondary and vocational education.

KEY GAPS IDENTIFIED AND EMERGING NEEDS

HEALTH

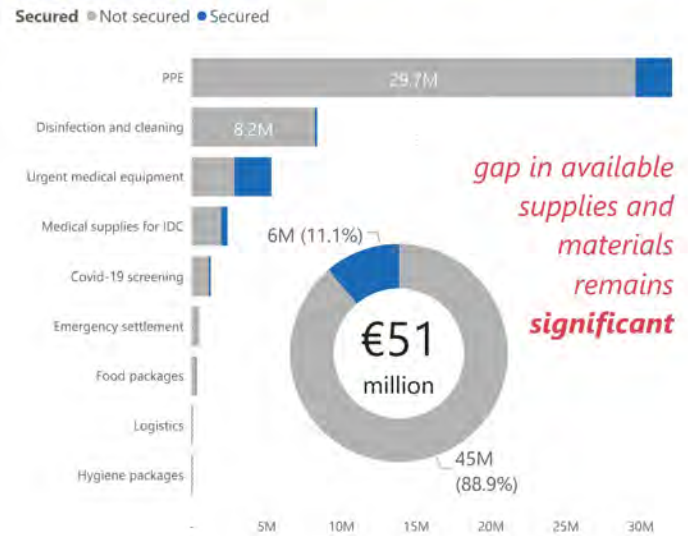
The most important priority at this point and in the next 3 months is to ensure that the health system can cope with increasing numbers of cases needing intensive management, protecting the health care workers and ensuring essential social and medical care to the most vulnerable.

Technical health priorities:

- Assess the socio-economic impact on the health system during and after the crisis;

KEY GAPS IDENTIFIED AND EMERGING NEEDS

Overview of urgent supplies and materials' needs by category and estimated value (€)



* Visuals based on the consolidated list of supplies and equipment needs. (16 Apr 2020)

- Determine the level of immunity to the virus in the population;
- Review of the testing algorithms in consideration of the strategy to increase testing;
- Increase the use of eHealth and telemedicine to improve and facilitate population preventive interventions;
- Strengthen epidemiological capacity.

Critical needs:

- Laboratory kits and reagents; personal protective equipment (PPE); mechanical ventilators/respirators (respirators from operating rooms are not adapted to need of respiratory diseases and cannot be used for the ICU);
- intensifying risk communication;
- socioeconomic relief for vulnerable groups and employment protection;
- Maintaining essential health and social services;
- Protecting health care workers whether those working in the COVID-19 designated facilities or elsewhere countrywide because of the community transmission;
- Mental health support to health workers and the public, especially the most vulnerable.

The list of critical needs is compiled, consolidated and regularly updated by the Government with the assistance of the United Nations.

Challenges:

- Protecting health care workers, whether those working at COVID-19 designated facilities or elsewhere country-wide due to community transmission; and coping with potential shortage of health workers;
- Procurement: hampered access to local or international markets for supplies and equipment, in particular ventilators, due to shortages and logistical constraints;
- Limited community support and outreach activities for the most vulnerable;
- Ensuring continuity of treatment and access to regular health care for all citizens, including vulnerable groups with other diseases and pathologies;
- Isolation and mental health support for the elderly and disabled;
- Ensuring full compliance of the public with the instructions to self-isolate.

KEY GAPS IDENTIFIED AND EMERGING NEEDS

SOCIO - ECONOMIC IMPACT

- The Ministry of Finance expects the economic crisis to peak in the second quarter of the year with a projected 15% decline, while the first quarter is to end positively on the back of the relatively solid economic results in the first two months of the year. Mild recovery is expected in the third quarter and some positive results in the final quarter of 2020.

- Survey made by the Economic Chamber of Macedonia between 7 and 14 April among the member companies with more than €1.5 billion revenues in 2019, almost equal representation of micro, small, medium and large companies, more than half of them in the processing industry (36%) and construction (17%) and relatively large representation of the hospitality, food service and trade companies most of them working for more than 10 years demonstrated the following:

Production capacity

- More than half of the responders have not experienced any supply disruptions, while 26% faced supply disruption from EU, 11% from non-EU countries and from 9% within the country;
- 18% do not pose any storage capacities, while 58% will fully use their storages in the first two months of the crisis;
- 16% reported normal functioning in March and only 7% expect the same in April;
- 17% reported more than 50% decrease in production in March and 23% expect that in April;
- All the rest expect a relatively balanced decrease of 50%.

Export:

- 40% continued to export at normal level and 34% expect the same in April;
- 13% reported export decrease of more than 50%, and 15% expect the same in April;
- 15% reported full disruption of the export and 21% expect the same in April.

Turnover:

- 16% reported normal turnover, for 13% it was decreased between 40-50% and for 25% it decreased for more than 50% in March;
- This is to worsen in April with only 4% expecting a normal turnover, 10% expect drop between 40-50% and 48% expect a decrease higher than 50%.

The above pessimism is supported by the initial announcements of the Public Revenue Office of reduced VAT collection in the first half of April.

UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

United Nations in North Macedonia is collectively supporting the Government and international partners with the overview of needs and procurement of urgent medical and protective supplies and equipment for immediate response. The UN agencies, funds and programmes present in North Macedonia are – in close coordination with its Government counterparts – are conducting the following activities or adjusting their work to support response:

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has been at the forefront of response since January. WHO supports the country to raise awareness about maintaining essential health services and importance of immunization in preventing diseases and protecting life at the time of COVID19. Activities are held during the European Immunization Week 2020, from 20-26 April 2020. WHO is supporting North Macedonia for sero-epidemiological studies investigating the extent of infection in the general population, as determined by seropositivity. A standardized WHO master protocol is available that is now being tailored to country needs in terms

of public health, laboratory and clinical systems, capacity, availability of resources and cultural appropriateness.

The **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** provided two standard sets of RT-PCR (real-time polymerase chain reaction) equipment, consumables, primers and probes (total value approximately 72,000EUR for one set), one to the Laboratory for Molecular Diagnostic, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, and another to the Laboratory for Virology and Molecular Diagnostics, Institute of Public Health in Skopje. This will help the country for the rapid detection of the COVID-19 and one set is sufficient for approximately 2,000 tests. The equipment will be delivered to the Institutes in May. Further information can be found [here](#).

International Labour Organization (ILO) is supporting the Organization of Employers of Macedonia (OEM) in conducting a survey that should give a more accurate picture of the scope and consequences of the reduced economic activity in the country caused by the crisis with the pandemic of Covid-19. The research is conducted electronically, through a survey questionnaire submitted to OEM members, and it is also available to other companies via the link [HERE](#). The aim is to provide information on their current situation, measures they are taking to alleviate the problems they face in the current crisis, as well as the type of support they expect from the Government. Based on the feedback obtained through this research, the Organization of Employers of Macedonia will identify the urgent needs of the business and will properly translate them into proposals to the Government.

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** is supporting prevention and protection of COVID-19 through education and dissemination of informative materials in the Transit Reception Centers in languages spoken by the migrants, including Arabic, English and Farsi. Personal protective equipment (PPEs) and hygiene kits were made available to the migrants and personnel in the reception sites. In close cooperation with the Institute for Public Health of the Republic of North Macedonia, regular disinfection of the Transit Reception Centres has been conducted

United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) has established new partnership with HOPS - Healthy Options Project Skopje to provide creative and educational activities for children in small group homes and correctional facilities during self-isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF kicked off an online workshop for volunteer UNICEF Youth Reporters engaging 18 volunteers to develop stories on how young people are coping with COVID-19.

In partnership with the Red Cross, UNICEF delivered one-month worth of hygiene and WASH supplies to state facilities providing services to vulnerable persons and children. The supplies are meant to help these institutions strengthen their preventive efforts and stop the spread of COVID-19 to their beneficiaries. Various PPE was ordered (600 bottles disinfectant, 10,000 FFP masks, 50,000 gloves and 20 pulse oximeters) in order to support local medical authorities.

Training of operators of a national help line for counselling of parents and caregivers on positive parenting practices was conducted, focusing on the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose was to ensure that adequate and timely support is provided to parents and caregivers to prevent and address the potential negative secondary impacts of COVID-19.

UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) remain committed to supporting the Government of North Macedonia at a time of existential increased use of the internet for use as a 'digital office', shopping online, joining online forums and webinars. The significantly increased risk of cyber criminality is now well documented and the risk of exposure to such crime grows symbiotically.

UNODC support to regional Law Enforcement agencies has increased further with the offer of free access to UN e-Learning modules for operational staff.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) monitors how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the work of food supply operators through the recently introduced weekly Rapid Survey of Food Supply Chains in Europe and Central Asia. Farmers, wholesalers, traders, food processors are interviewed on a weekly basis to collect evidence on the functioning of agricultural supply chains in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. A novel [Crop calendar](#) has been introduced by FAO to provide recommendations on planting and harvesting during the COVID-19 pandemic, by commodity and country. Interim [Guidance](#) for Food Businesses on COVID-10 and Food Safety issued by FAO and WHO has been translated in [Macedonian](#) language by the Institute for Public Health and available on IPH's [webpage](#). It provides recommendations for food producers on the necessary measures to be enforced to prevent food workers' exposure to or transmission of the coronavirus, on food hygiene and sanitation practices needed to maintain the integrity of the food chains and to ensure adequate and safe food supplies are available for consumers. Updated collection of FAO policy briefs is available [here](#).

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) dedicated [website](#) to COVID-19 is constantly updated with policy tools, key messages, new policy briefs and publications on the pandemic's impact on sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence and youth. All COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions can be found [here](#). The call of the First Lady of North Macedonia on the importance to leave no one behind and the role of UNFPA response was shared on [CO social media channels](#) as well as several social media highlights on UNFPA response were published globally. Technical Brief on the Implications of COVID-19 on Census was translated and published in [Macedonian](#).

A draft Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) has been developed through collaboration between the United Nations, the Government of North Macedonia and international partners, looking into health and socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

The CPRP provides a brief assessment of the situation, including risks to the most vulnerable, and resource gaps. It outlines the UN Country Team's COVID-19 programmatic portfolio, with gaps as needed to inform the use of relevant funding instruments; and the UN's non-programmatic support in terms of analysis, policy advice, communication and messaging (i.e. advocacy, HR monitoring, networking).

Over the coming weeks, a details analysis of the socio-economic impact of the situation will be conducted and incorporated in the CPRP that will offer analytical and resource mobilization framework to guide international support in response to COVID-19 in North Macedonia.

The current estimated health component gap over the period of three months for immediate response is estimated at is approximately \$4531 million. The assessment of macroeconomic impact and sectoral disturbances, as well as the needs, required response and resources, particularly to assist the most vulnerable, is ongoing.

MAIN LINKS

Government

<https://koronavirus.gov.mk/>

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/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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