

# SITUATION REPORT #2

## COVID-19



UNITED NATIONS  
NORTH MACEDONIA

23 MARCH 2020

# 136

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

# 2

is the age of the youngest patient infected.

# 1

patient fully recovered and released from hospital.

# 2

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.
- 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 is also prohibited on public spaces such as parks and city squares.
- 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 is recommended [see the list as of 22 March 2020].
- Skopje International Airport is closed for passengers as of 18 March, 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 (MoI).
- 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 MoI, Ministry of Health (MoH), Transport and Communications (MoTC), Defense (MoD) and Foreign Affairs (MoFA).
- Three expert committees further support the response:
  1. Infectious Diseases Commission, providing technical advice to MoH
  2. International health regulations (IHR) multisectoral commission
  3. Operational Committee — Task Force for COVID-19
- All medical and health staff and mechanical respirators from public and private health facilities have been mobilized as of 15 March 2020.
- 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.
  - 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  
21 March 2020

19 March 2020  
22 March 2020

20 March 2020



### ECONOMY

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

- Economic measures to curb the impact of COVID-19 adopted as of 23 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 etc.)
  - Freeze prices of basic nutrition products, medicines and disinfection materials (not applicable to products imported at higher prices).
  - Ensure €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 and 0% interest rate;

- Ensure €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;
- Reducing some of the parafiscal fees, e.g. 50% decrease of the general penalty fee (for delayed payments) and 50% of penalty fee for delays in public duties.
- 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.

Measures announced by the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia, in cooperation with the Banks' Association, to facilitate credit activity:

- Reduced key interest rate by 0.25% to 1.75%.
- Reduced mandatory reserves for new or reprogrammed loans to most affected companies.
- Regulatory easing in relation to liquidity assessments (credit risk management).
- Abolished fees for withdrawing and returning cash to the central vault.

Following the State of Emergency declaration, the Federation of Trade Unions requested that the Government ensures:

- Moratorium on all cancellations of employment contracts due to economic, organizational, technological, structural or similar reasons by the employer for a period of 60 days ;
- Undelayed and full payment of salaries without reduction; delay of payment of compulsory social security contributions (to within 6 months after the crisis).
- Delay in payments for loans and reprogramming for 6 months for all private sector workers, citizens and companies.



## 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 and there are almost [300 online lessons](#) which are being uploaded on the platform.

## KEY GAPS IDENTIFIED AND EMERGING NEEDS

## 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:

- Adequate supply of personal protection equipment (PPE) for medical personnel, border and airport authorities;
- Case investigation supplies – lab consumable kits;

## KEY GAPS IDENTIFIED AND EMERGING NEEDS

- Machines for mechanical invasive ventilation (respirators) and other case management medical equipment;
- 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.

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 has adjusted its ongoing activities 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 will be 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**

## UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has introduced a hotline to be administered by professional UNHCR staff.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is partnering with the University Clinic of Psychiatry on prevention and addressing the secondary impact of the outbreak through provision of psychosocial support and counselling to children and caregivers impacted by COVID-19. The potential secondary impact of the outbreak includes psychosocial distress, neglect and lack of parental care, increased exposure to violence, and physical and emotional abuse.

UNICEF, in coordination with the relevant institutions, works on development of plan for technical support to child protection services, including frontline workers, professionals and local communities, to promote positive parenting and wellbeing, mitigate toxic stress and potential for violence against children, with focus on vulnerable groups at higher risk of secondary impacts.

UNICEF continues with social mobilization using digital communication channels focusing on families and children on risk communication, hand washing and providing tools to help parents support continued learning at home. UNICEF issued a [statement](#) on to alert the public on misinformation shared widely on social media incorrectly attributing UNICEF as the source.

UN Development Programme (UNDP) is putting together a package of activities for outreach to the Roma communities on COVID-19 prevention. Provision of basic personal hygiene supplies to the poorest Roma communities maybe also included in the package.

UNDP has also worked on the Concept for primary education of adults, and accordingly developed 17 programmes required for finalization of the primary education. Programmes have been presented on an e-platform that can be reached through [www.npv.mk](http://www.npv.mk). E-platform's opportunities as e-learning tool are essential for handling the current unpleasant situation face.

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

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

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) plans to procure equipment and sanitary items for the health facilities managing COVID-19 cases, focusing on the needs of women,

## UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

girls and elderly. UNFPA also intends to support the inclusion of the WHO online training for health professionals into the national e-health system "Moj Termin" and continues to explore options to support the vulnerable groups with sanitary items.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) published a specialized [Q&A section](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture.

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](http://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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