

# SITUATION REPORT #9

## COVID-19



UNITED NATIONS  
NORTH MACEDONIA

6 MAY 2020

# 1,539

confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country.

# 4

 months.

the age of the youngest patient.

# 1,057

fully recovered patients.

# 88

deaths associated with COVID-19.

## KEY GOVERNMENT MEASURES AND RESPONSE



### TRAVEL

- State of emergency is in force across the entire territory of the country until 15 May 2020.
- Movement is prohibited between 19:00 and 05:00hrs during weekdays, with further restrictions for elderly people and youth up to age 18.
- Mandatory use of masks, scarfs, shawls or similar piece of clothing to cover the mouth and nose in all enclosed public spaces such as markets, pharmacies or banks has been introduced on 22 April 2020. The same is applicable in crowded open areas.
- Restaurants, bars, clubs and casinos remain closed for business. Gathering of groups of more than two people in public spaces is prohibited, excluding parents of children up to age 14.
- All public transport to and from 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

- 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, remain deployed.
- All patients from the Hospital in Kumanovo have been transferred to the Clinic for Infectious Diseases in Skopje due to shortage of health professionals in self-isolation. The Kumanovo hospital infectious disease department functions as triage point for assessments and referrals.
- The Health Insurance Fund introduced e-prescription for chronic conditions. From the beginning of May, people with chronic conditions can obtain or extend their prescriptions through a phone call and general practitioners are able to prescribe electronically.
- Ministry of Health (MoH) started mass screening of different groups of the population to see the percent of people exposed to COVID-19.
- Cancer patients are now able to receive therapy closer to their homes with the distribution of therapy to other health centres, rather than visiting the Oncology clinic in Skopje.



### ECONOMY

Discussions during the regular (virtual) Spring Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank with the representatives of the Government of North Macedonia and the Central Bank focused on the stability of the financial system as a top priority.

The World Bank will provide an additional \$151/€140 million in loans, out of which \$97/€90 million will be used for rapid action against COVID-19 in the health sector and the remaining \$54/€50 million to provide minimal salary (MKD 14,500 per employee) for employers and self-employed. Meanwhile, following reactions from the unions and the civil society, the Government adjusted the measure to restrict the conditions under which the companies can lay off workers and remain eligible for financial support.

The Government has adopted a set of regulation related to education (see below) and extended categorization licenses for performing hospitality services.



### EDUCATION

- All educational institutions remain closed.
- On 30 April, the Government adopted a set of regulations related to education that allow for the online completion of the school year, including the continuation of primary and secondary education online until 10 June; and the postponement of enrolment for the school year 2020-2021 for first-graders until June, with results published by 15 July.
- In addition, the Ministry of Education will draft regulations to allow for exemption of students in the final year of secondary education from final state exams ('matura') and to allow enrolment in the tertiary education without the final exam; and to extend duration of expired study programmes;
- One parent of children under the age of ten and one parent of children with disabilities (regardless of age) can 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.
- **National Digital Platform**, a one-stop-shop for sharing online lessons, continues to expand with new video lessons for all levels of education. In pre-school education there are 120 video lessons, whereas in primary education 600 videos are available in both Macedonian and Albanian languages. Additional vocational education lessons will be made available.
- TV lessons conducted by pre-primary and primary teachers are also available on national television every weekday.

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

## HEALTH

The gaps and needs related to the public health response for the period of three months, identified by the Government with the assistance of WHO and based on the rapid assessment of the relevant country mechanisms and response structures in early April, have been estimated at approximately \$31/€28.7 million.

### Technical needs:

- Conducting risk assessments for easing measures and enhance planning capacity for transition strategy;
- Assess the socio-economic impact on the health system, during and after the crisis;
- Determine the level of exposure to the virus and immunity among 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:

- Supplies and materials: laboratory kits and reagents; personal protective equipment (PPE); mechanical ventilators;
- Intensifying risk communication;
- Socio-economic relief for vulnerable groups and employment protection;
- Maintaining essential health and social services;
- Protecting health care workers, whether those working in COVID-19 designated facilities or elsewhere countrywide, because of community transmission;
- Mental health support to health workers and the public, especially the most vulnerable.

### Challenges:

- Procurement: hampered access to local or international markets for supplies and equipment due to shortages and logistical constraints;
- Ensuring sustainability of health facilities and health care, during and after the crisis.
- Outreach and social support to the most vulnerable;
- Ensuring continuity of treatment and access to regular health care for all, including the vulnerable groups with other diseases and pathologies;
- Managing isolation and scaling up community engagement across all regions of the country;
- Compliance with instructions and self-isolation.

## SOCIO - ECONOMIC

Based on the currently available fiscal data and noting global and other key trade partners' growth projections, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) expects 3.4% contraction of the economy in 2020, resulting from:

- 16.8% export decrease due to decreased consumption and investment, remittances and foreign direct investments;
- 3.3% decline in private consumption and 9.6% gross investment drop, despite mitigating effect of the Government response measures;
- 2.7% growth in public consumption, mainly as a result of increased health sector spending;
- 15.8% decline in import of goods and services;
- Negative -0.2% inflation rate projection for 2020.

Budget realization for April and the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019 has been stronger compared to MoF's initial (favourable scenario) projections.

### April 2020 vs. April 2019:

- Budget revenues decreased for 20%, mostly as result of decreased tax collections;
- Tax revenues dropped for 31%, which is less than the initially projected drop of 40%, out of which:
  - VAT revenues are lower by 43.5%;
  - Personal income tax decreased by 11.7%;
  - Profit tax increased for 3.6%;
  - Excises fell by 40%;
  - Customs fees dropped for 26%.
- Contributions remained the same as last year.
- Other revenues (non-tax, capital and donations) marked a decrease of 20% on an annual basis.
- Expenditures noted a slight growth of 0.7%, with current expenditures at the same level, expenditures for goods and services lower for 36.5%, increase in transfers (7%) and in capital expenditures (15.7%).

### Q1 2020 vs. Q1 2019:

- Budget revenues decreased for 4.9%, out of which:
  - Tax revenues dropped for 9.1%, due to the decline in VAT collection by 14.6%.
  - Contributions increased by 9.2%.
- Expenditures were higher by 7%, with an increase in capital expenditures for 21% compared to last year.

The National Bank also corrected its growth projections and is now expecting a decline of 3.5% this year and strong recovery of 4.7% in 2021, reducing to 4% in 2022. This year's fall is a result of expected overall decline in all GDP components, with personal consumption decreased for 4%, gross investments decreased for 10%, export down for 17% and import down for 15%. The inflation is expected to be 0 in 2020. In case of a prolonged crisis and doubled reduction of the external demand (from 5% to 10%) the GDP of North Macedonia is expected to decline for an additional 2.3% (-5.8%).

On 9 April, the Government made a decision to cut financial support for civil society organizations across different sectors, envisioned in the 2020 national budget. No prior announcement and consultations were made with civil society representatives. In protest, the Council for Cooperation and Development of Civil Society filed a petition underlining the harmful impact of this course of action on their capacities and abilities to continue to provide services and assistance to those in need at the time of pandemic.

## INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

To-date, international assistance to North Macedonia's COVID-19 response has reached \$79/€73.2 million in grant support, off which \$9/€8.3 million has been made available to finance the immediate health response and \$70/€64.8 million has been earmarked for socio-economic response, a significant share of which is expected to be operationalized in the coming months. The three biggest sources of support for the response (in terms of grants or in kind support) have been the European Union (EU, \$72.6/€67.2 million), the United Nations (UN, \$1.8/€1.7 million) and the United States (\$1.2/€1.1 million), followed by Norway, Switzerland, Czech Republic and China. Most of this funding has been redirected from existing or planned programmes for North Macedonia, with limited new COVID-19 specific funding being made available predominately for immediate health response.

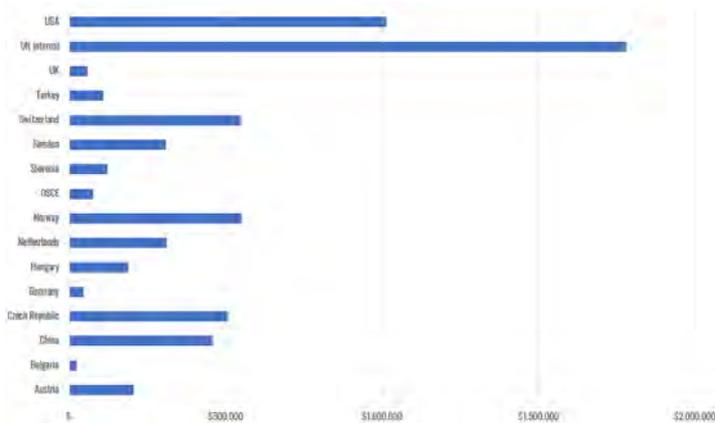
## INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

In addition, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and EU have provided the country with sizable favourable conditions loans of over \$521/€483 million. These loans offer easily accessible credit financing to support the liquidity of the budget and help reduce risks and cost to the country associated with borrowing on the currently uncertain international markets.

### International grant/in kind support for response

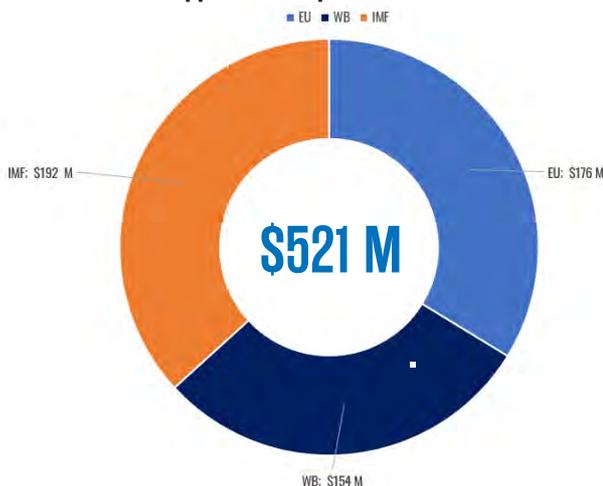


### Non EU grant/in kind support for response



Financial data in US Dollars, based on triangulation of data compiled by the UN in North Macedonia, information made available by the Secretariat for European Affairs (Government of North Macedonia) and estimated value of in-kind donations based on average market prices of items in cases when only item description was provided. Data includes secured funding and announced funding that may be pending final approval.

### International loan support for response



Financial data in US Dollars. Source: UN North Macedonia and SEP

## UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

United Nations in North Macedonia has collectively supported the Government and international partners with the overview of needs and procurement of urgent medical and protective supplies, and equipment for immediate response, as well as conducting the analysis and framing the broader response to the socio-economic impact of the crisis.

The UN agencies, funds and programmes in North Macedonia are — in close coordination with its Government counterparts — have reported the following activities since the issuance of the previous Situation Report #8 (29 April):

The World Health Organization (WHO) has been supporting the country in raising awareness about maintaining essential health services and importance of immunization in preventing diseases and protecting life at the time of COVID-19, as part of the European Immunization Week 2020 (20-26 April 2020).

WHO, in partnership with the National Institute of Public Health, initiated the COVID-19 behavioural survey to better understand issues such as trust in health authorities, recommendations and information, risk perceptions, acceptance of recommended behaviours, knowledge, barriers/drivers to recommended behaviours, misperceptions and stigma. The results, expected by mid-May 2020, will be available to the policy makers to assess and modify risk communication strategies on aspects related to COVID-19 and will also inform post-pandemic actions, e.g. addressing possible family, mental health or other adverse events as a result of the crisis.

On 8 May, WHO is organizing a training for scaling up national laboratory capacities, which will include national laboratories engaged in COVID-19 testing.

WHO is also supporting the authorities in assessing the situation in view of eventual relaxation of restrictive public health measures.

United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) risk communication materials focusing on handwashing, tips on staying protected from COVID-19, parenting tips and promotion of services to support families with children with disabilities have been finalised and will be distributed to vulnerable families and displayed in selected supermarkets and pharmacies throughout the country.

The first volunteering in the time of COVID-19 initiative, developed with volunteers during a design thinking workshop, is in final stage of development ready for launch. #PlantAtHome builds on young people's need for activities to support healthy emotional wellbeing and young people's expression of interest to learn new skills during lockdown.

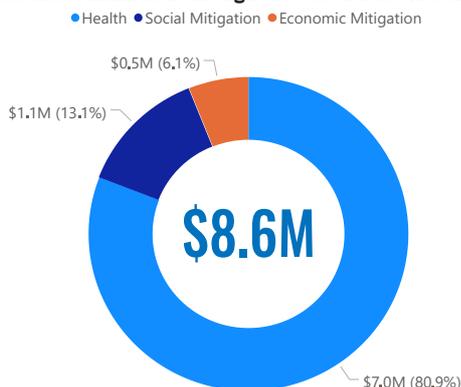
The Framework for safely reopening of schools, that UNICEF jointly developed with UNESCO, World Food Programme and World Bank, was shared with the Minister of Education to effectively plan and take measures for reopening of school at the beginning of the next school year in September.

The national help line for counselling of parents and caregivers on positive parenting practices is now operational.

As part of the UN family's integrated global response, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has developed a comprehensive COVID-19 Policy and Programme Offer designed to inform nations and countries on how UNDP can support them in responding to COVID-19, safeguarding progress on sustainable development goals (SDGs) and delivering on the pledge to leave no one behind. UNDP is offering macro, meso and micro tools that can be deployed at global,

## UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

### Grant assistance channeled through the UN entities in North Macedonia



Financial data in US Dollars, includes secured funding and announced funding pending approval. Source: UN North Macedonia

regional, national and sub-national levels to support a response at each stage of the outbreak: readiness, response and recovery. Leveraging UNDP's integrator role, ability to work across humanitarian-development nexus, resources and partnerships and our operational strength, UNDP can support government and other partners across the value chain of the COVID-19 response. Broadly, UNDP's offer covers support in three inter-linked areas, Health Systems Support, Inclusive and Integrated Crisis Management and Responses, and Assessing and Addressing the Socioeconomic Impact.

**United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** has procured 8,800 pieces of most urgent medical supplies for treating COVID-19 cases such as pump systems, catheter sets, extension and infusion lines and syringes as part of the "EU Assistance to COVID-19 Response of the Government of North Macedonia" project. The supplies were delivered to Skopje's Infectious Diseases Clinic on 30 April and 4 May 2020.

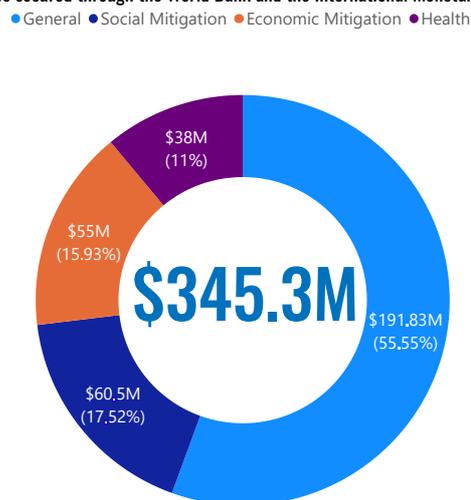
**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** continues to inform the persons under its mandate on all the vital information regarding COVID-19 through their [Help Page](#) and the [Hotline](#) +389(0)70229001, which is administered by professional UNHCR staff.

UNHCR distributed the WHO recommendation on Safe Ramadan practices in Arabic, Pashtu, Dari, Turkish, Spanish, Russian, English and French to the Reception Centre for asylum-seekers in Vizbegovo and Reception and Transit Centre Vinojug.

**The United Nations Population Fund - UNFPA** has prepared and widely shared the [UNFPA Questionnaire: Youth and COVID-19](#) for a quick assessment of the situation and needs of young people in CSE, SRH, and civic engagement during and post COVID19. These questions can be also integrated into other youth-focused surveys conducted by UN agencies. The technical brief for [Implications of COVID-19 for Older Persons: Responding to the Pandemic](#) was developed and published, which emphasized the humanitarian imperative of addressing older persons' specific needs within the preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women)** is providing support to address the immediate needs of the most vulnerable women and families affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. In close coordination with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and funded by the Swiss and Swedish development cooperation agencies, long lasting food and hygienic products will be provided to 368 single parent families, beneficiaries of

### Loan assistance secured through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, per category



Financial data in US Dollars, includes secured funding and announced funding pending approval. Source: UN North Macedonia

guaranteed minimum income, out of which majority (95%) are women; 328 registered survivors of domestic violence; as well as to the shelters and crisis centers for survivors of gender based violence across the country.

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 provided a brief assessment of the situation, including risks to the most vulnerable, and resource gaps, and it outlined 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.

A detailed analysis of the socio-economic impact of the situation is currently ongoing and will be incorporated in the COVID-19 Response Framework (CRF) in the coming weeks. The CRF will offer analytical and resource mobilization framework to guide international support in response to COVID-19 in North Macedonia.

## MAIN LINKS

### Government

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

### Institute of public health

[www.iph.mk](http://www.iph.mk)

### Ministry of health

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

### WHO North Macedonia

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

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

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

### In case of symptoms and asymptomatic travelers

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

### Psychological support

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

### General information

"Alo Doctor" Call Center	02 15 123
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