



#### HIGHLIGHTS:

##### In the last 48 hours

- **Tests performed:** 279 and 386 SARS-CoV-2 tests hours, 7.5% and 5.96% tested positive, in each day respectively.
- **New cases:** 21 and 23 new cases were reported on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively
- **Recovered:** 149 COVID-19 patients
- **Fatalities:** 6 new COVID-19 deaths.

##### Cumulative registered COVID-19 as of 30 April

- 1465 cases of which **235 detected among health professionals (16%)**.
- **Geographic Spread and deaths:** COVID-19 cases are registered in 28 cities – with majority of all cases **71% from three cities Skopje, Kumanovo and Prilep** (498, 389, 150 cases, respectively). **Almost 64% of all deaths are registered in Kumanovo, Skopje and Struga.**
- For the first time, the number of recovered cases (738) is higher than the number of active cases (650).
- **Gender distribution:** More women are infected with coronavirus than men (770 and 695 respectively). However, 66% of all deaths are men.
- **Comorbidity:** 74% of death cases
- **Age distribution:**
  - >60-year: 21% of all confirmed COVID-19 cases
  - >60-year: 64% of all deaths.
  - 0-9-year: 51 confirmed COVID-19 cases
  - 10-19-year: 59 confirmed COVID-19 cases

- **Globally, the number of total confirmed cases has exceeded 3 million only 3 months since the WHO declaration** of a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC).
- **Join TODAY WHO experts Friday, 1 May at 13:00 Geneva time – Registration is available [HERE](#), and learn more about the science behind COVID-19 immune response** and how this relates to the concept of immunity passport **Does the detection of antibodies to the SARS-CoV-2 virus serve as the basis for an “immunity passport”** or “risk-free certificate” enabling travel or return to work if protective against re-infection? There is currently no evidence that people who have recovered from COVID-19 and have antibodies are protected from a second infection.

#### SITUATION IN NUMBERS

##### total (new) cases in the last 24 hours

##### North Macedonia

1465 confirmed (23)

77 deaths

738 recovered

235 health care workers

##### Globally

3 090 445 confirmed (71 839)

217 769 deaths (9797)

##### European Region

1 434 649 confirmed (27 824)

135 961 deaths (6650)

##### Regions of the Americas

1 246 190 confirmed (33 102)

65 228 deaths (2824)

##### Eastern Mediterranean Region

182 417 confirmed (5489)

7447 deaths (143)

##### Western Pacific Region

147 743 confirmed (1294)

6094 deaths (57)

##### South-East Asia Region

54 021 confirmed (2670)

2088 deaths (87)

##### African Region

24 713 confirmed (1460)

938 deaths (36)

#### WHO RISK ASSESSMENT

Very high in all North Macedonia

Very High Globally

SURVEILLANCE

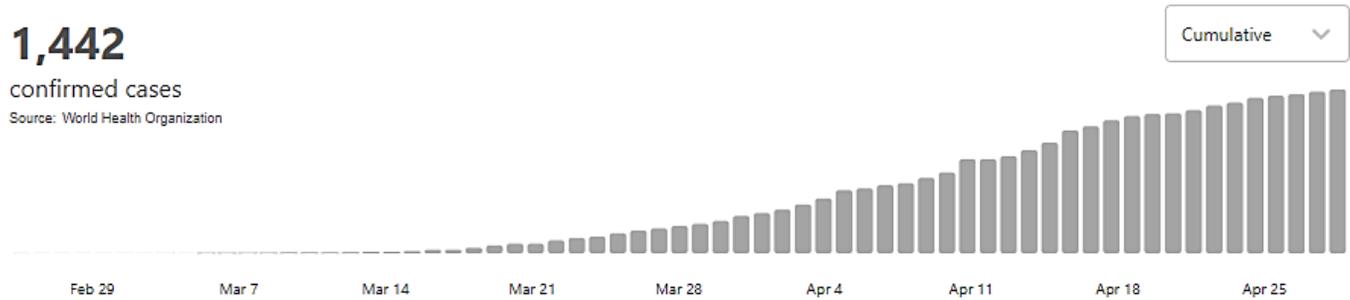
Figure 1. North Macedonia – Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases (n=1442) and deaths (n=73) by 30 April 2020 20:00

Confirmed Cases Over Time

1,442

confirmed cases

Source: World Health Organization



Deaths Over Time

73

deaths

Source: World Health Organization

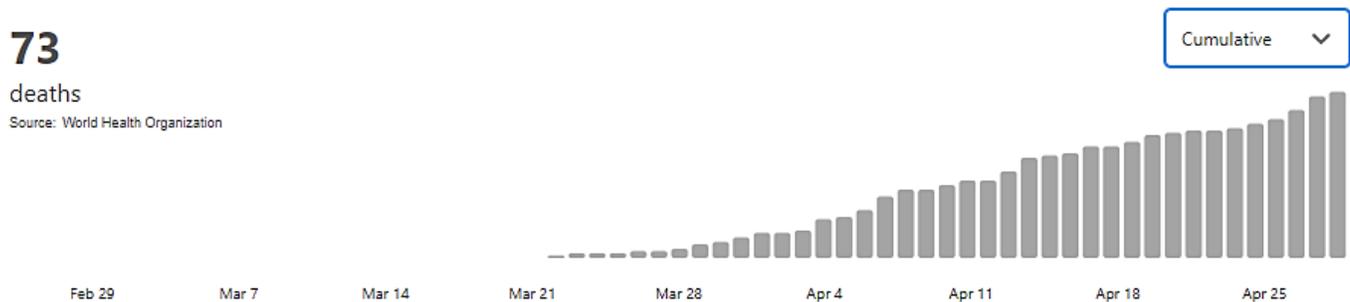
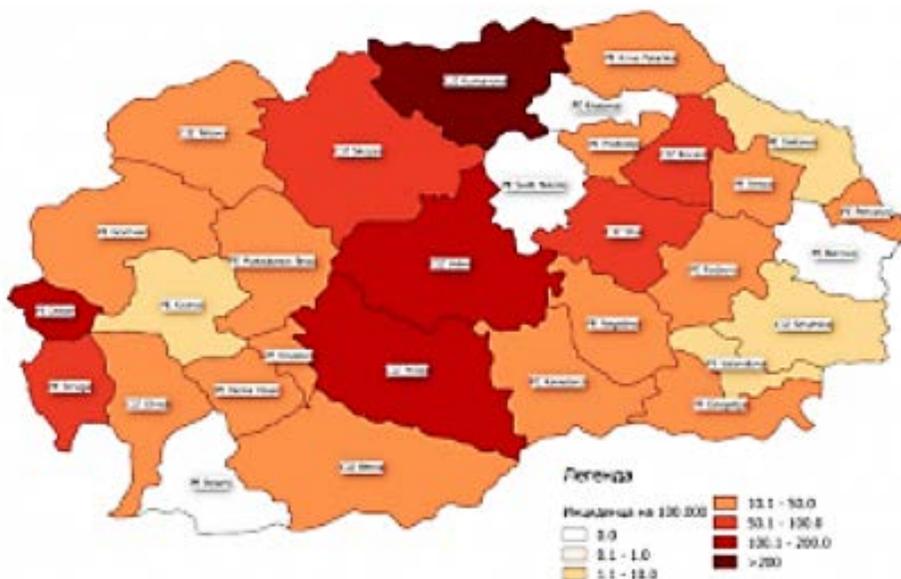


Figure 2. North Macedonia – COVID-19 incidence per 100,000 people, as of 30 April 2020



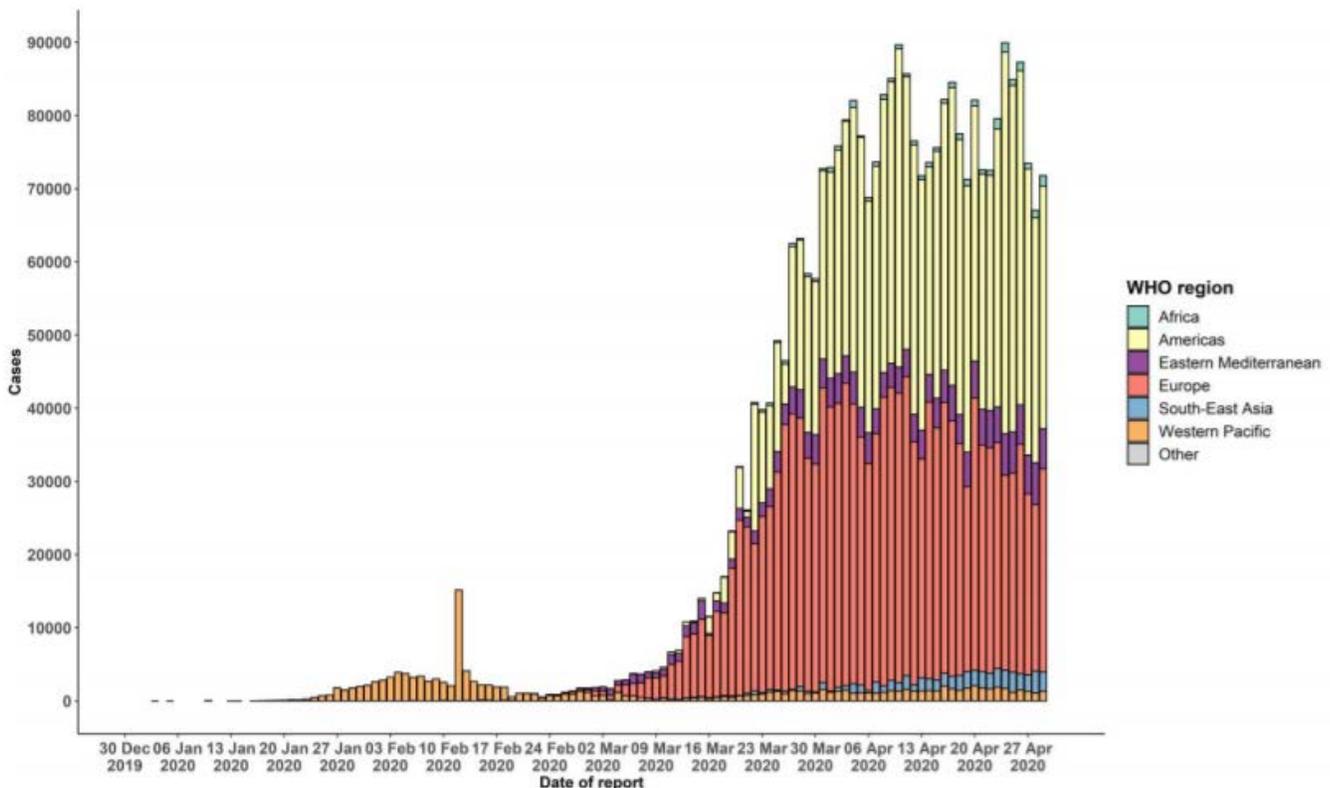
The highest cumulative incidence is in Kumanovo (272.6/100,000 people), followed by Debar (183.8/100,000 people), Prilep (157.4/100,000 people) and Veles (107.2/100,000 people). Four other cities have incidence above 50.0 cases per 100,000 people (Struga, Skopje, Shtip and Kochani).

Age of patients vary from 0-94 years (average age – 44.8 years old). However, the highest risk group is between 50-59 years old.

The disaggregated data of the confirmed COVID-19 cases through 29 April 2020 which includes the cases reported on 30 April 2020 by MoH could be accessed at the [www.iph.mk](http://www.iph.mk)

## GLOBAL COVID19 SITUATION

### Epidemic curve of confirmed COVID-19, by date of report and WHO region through 30 April 2020



### CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19), WHO EUROPE REGION as of 30 April 2020 10:00 CET

- Almost **half of the global burden** of SARS-CoV2 cases are reported to date in WHO Europe Region.
- Globally, **USA carries the heaviest case load** (1 003 974), with **Spain and Italy** concluding top-3. In addition, five more countries from the European Region are in the top-10 worldwide (**United Kingdom, Germany, France, Turkey, and Russian Federation**).
- In Europe, **seven countries reported 100 000 cases or more**, with Spain (212 917), Italy (203 591), United Kingdom (165 225), Germany (159 119), France (127 066), Turkey (117 589) and Russian Federation (106 498). Besides, twelve more countries reported 10 000 cases or more, listed in descending order (Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal, Sweden, Ireland, Israel, Austria, Belarus, Poland, Romania and Ukraine);
- Cumulatively, **62% of the global burden of COVID-19 deaths** (217 769 deaths) have been reported in the European Region (135 961 deaths), with Italy, Spain, France and United Kingdom each reporting more than 20 000 deaths and jointly accounting for approximately three-quarters of all deaths in Europe.
- **Another eight countries in the Region reported 1000 deaths or more** – Belgium (7501), Germany (6288), Netherlands (4711), Turkey (3081), Sweden (2462), Switzerland (1407), Ireland (1190) and Russian Federation (1073).

[German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier \(CDU\)](#) announced at the start of April that the government wants to become more independent, especially in the production of protective equipment. German MEP Bernd Lange (SPD), who chairs the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA), stated that "we are experiencing a change [in] globalisation, which is why trade policy must also change". Lange thinks the existing value chains should be restructured. "At the moment, value chains are being geared primarily to the criteria of efficiency and cost pressure," he told reporters on Wednesday (29 April). "But above all, they must be designed in a fair and sustainable manner." Nevertheless, it is to be expected that China will become significantly less attractive as a production location during the pandemic, Lange wrote in a position paper on trade policy published on 28 April. This transition could particularly benefit the countries of the Eastern and Southern Partnerships. The legislation on corporate due diligence through the supply chain ("supply chain law") is set to come into force next year, EU Commissioner Didier Reynders announced on Wednesday (29 April) during a webinar of the European Parliament's Responsible Business Working Group.

[World Bank](#): The Western Balkans region is expected to enter a recession in 2020, with all six countries forecast to experience negative growth as they continue to grapple with the economic impacts of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. Regional growth in the Western Balkans is forecast to be between -3 and -5.6 percent, according to the World Bank's latest Regular Economic Report (RER) - which uses a baseline scenario and a downside scenario in the face of high uncertainty brought on by the pandemic. The baseline scenario assumes that the outbreak in Europe begins to slow soon enough, such that containment measures can be lifted by the end of June and a gradual recovery can begin in the second half of 2020. The downside scenario assumes the outbreak lingers and containment measures can only be lifted at end of August, with a recovery of economic activity only in final quarter of 2020. [Reuters reports](#): Even under the baseline scenario, Albania and Kosovo, whose economic structure depends on service exports and tourism, will be hit hard and their economies are projected to contract by about 5%, the report said. Montenegro's economy is seen as shrinking by 5.6%. Export-oriented and dependent on EU markets, Bosnia, North Macedonia and Serbia are expected to experience only slightly less acute recessions. Their economies are set to suffer from supply-side disruptions and seen contracting by 3.2%, 1.4% and 2.5% respectively.

[The European Commission](#) is announcing over €3.3 billion of EU financial support mobilised jointly with the European Investment Bank to the benefit of the Western Balkans' citizens. This package aims to address the immediate health and resulting humanitarian needs of the coronavirus pandemic as well as help with the social and economic recovery. In addition to the reinforced support, the Commission is in its contribution ahead of the EU-Western Balkans' leaders meeting of 6 May 2020 also outlining the broad parameters of longer-term support to be presented later this year in the form of an Economic and Investment Plan for the region.

### [New] WHAT IS NEW AT WHO?

- WHO Regional Director for Europe, Dr. Hans Henri P. Kluge, in his regular media briefing yesterday, highlighted "We cannot allow the impact of COVID-19 to be amplified by neglecting other vital health protection measures". More information is available [HERE](#).
- The WHO Regional Office for Europe has highlighted the **critical importance of COVID-19 patient rehabilitation**. More information is available [HERE](#).

### Public Health and Social Measures

- WHO has published a technical guidance titled '[Strengthening Preparedness for COVID-19 in Cities and Urban Areas](#).' The guidance supports local leaders and policy-makers in cities and other urban settings in implementing actions that enhance the prevention, preparedness and readiness for COVID-19. The document can be found [here](#).

### Infection Prevention and Control

- WHO reminds health authorities to take specific steps to **protect health care workers and communities during essential immunization activities** during the COVID-19 pandemic. PAHO has published an article on this, available [here](#).

#### Clinical and Health Interventions:

- **COVID-19 exposes the critical importance of patient rehabilitation** – read the WHO/EURO news story highlighting the importance of rehabilitation services as part of the response to COVID-19. Access the article [HERE](#).

#### Learning Resources:

- A micro-learning course on "**Mother-infant health in the context of COVID-19**" has just been published in a collaboration of ECDC and the Italian National Institute of Health - [Istituto Superiore di Sanità](#), Italy ([Go to the course](#)). The course covers area such as the mode of transmission including vertical transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and the guiding principles during the COVID-19 pandemic on:
  - caring for pregnant women suspected of or with COVID-19.
  - the self-isolation of pregnant women and their partners.
  - handling the pregnant women during childbirth.
  - handling of the mother-baby dyad in the immediate postpartum.
  - breastfeeding and infant feeding.

#### WHAT WHO IS DOING FOR COVID19 IN NORTH MACEDONIA?

In line with the strategic Government's approach in fighting COVID19 whereby efforts are put on increasing testing, maintaining quality COVID19 care and essential care and protecting health care workers, WHO works closely with the government and national and global health partners to enable the response.

#### Risk Communication

- **Translation of WHO guideline on Safe Ramadan practices in the context of the COVID-19:** in Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Roma languages.
- **European immunization week:** WHO supported 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. Click here : [European Immunization Week](#) . WHO MKD supported translation and adaptation of the following materials for social media:
  - EIW Poster adaptation
  - Video Adaptation - How do vaccine work?
  - Video Adaptation - Why should I get vaccinated

WHO action in COVID-19 outbreak in North Macedonia aims at limiting the virus spread, protecting health and the health workers at the frontline, preserving the health care system capacity and its sustainability to respond and provide essential services to the population.

WHO is the lead UN agency for Health and main technical and health policy advisor to the government on COVID-19 containment and mitigation.

WHO works in coordination closely with other UN agencies as per the UN reform.

Western Balkan including North Macedonia is one of the priority countries for the WHO European Region.

Technical support, guidance and assistance are provided through the WHO Country Office from all levels of the Organization.

There is abundance of technical guidance WHO has developed in all areas of work: we are supporting the country to develop technical plans and implement priority interventions in the framework of a strong nation-wide strategic response.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

## Risk perception and behavioral change

- WHO initiated in partnership with National Institute of Public Health **COVID-19 behavioral survey** to gain an understanding of 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 will be available to the policy makers to assess and modify risk communication strategies on aspects related to COVID19. The results will also inform post-pandemic actions, e.g. addressing possible family, mental health or other adverse events as a result of the crisis. The final results are expected around mid-May 2020.

## Identification, virus testing and contact tracing

- **WHO is organizing on 8 May 2020.a training for scaling up national laboratory capacities.** The national laboratories in North Macedonia engaged in COVID-19 testing to take part in it. The objective of the conference is to:
  - o Update on tests available for COVID-19 testing
  - o Verification and validation processes
  - o Recommendations to ensure procurement during scaling up national laboratory capacities for COVID-19
  - o Recommendations and discussion on training possibilities for scaling up
- WHO **donated 5000 COVID tests** to the Virology Lab of the Institute of Public Health on 8 April 2020.
- With WHO/USAID support, the health **emergency operations venue at MOH** is now equipped and functional in its temporary premises, refurbished and with IT equipment.
- WHO is supporting North Macedonia as part of the **Unity Study 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 being now tailored to country needs in terms of public health, laboratory and clinical systems, capacity, availability of resources and cultural appropriateness. Using this standardized protocol allows for comparability of data across different countries and helps to determine important epidemiological parameters (e.g. the proportion of the population that remains susceptible to infection, proportion of asymptomatic infections etc.) which inform public health action. The protocol can be accessed here: [HERE](#)

## Infection control and prevention in health care settings

- **Support to the World Hand Hygiene Day "Save Lives: Clean your Hands Campaign"** on 5 May. The slogan of the campaign is "**Nurses and Midwives, clean care is in your hands**". The objective is not only to promote good hand hygiene and infection prevention and control practices (COVID-19), but also to recognize the key role of nurses and midwives in preventing avoidable infections. WHO MKD translated 2-pager about Hand Hygiene & COVID-19 to be distributed to relevant facilities and through social media channels. The WHO campaign materials have been shared with the Ministry of Health. WHO encourages engaging of Minister of Health and health authorities to participate. **WHO donated PPE equipment** to two specialized university clinics in Skopje.
- WHO developed a **risk assessment tool to be used by health care facilities with COVID-19 patients**. The tool is to be completed for all health workers who have been exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 patient in a health care facility. The tool will help determine the risk of COVID-19 virus infection of all HCWs who have been exposed to a COVID-19 patient and then provides recommendations for appropriate management of these HCWs, according to their infection risk.
- WHO also held on Friday 3 April 2020, a **Zoom training session in Macedonian language** open for **all Health Care workers dealing with COVID19** for the proper practices in Infection control and prevention of virus transmission in hospitals and clinical management of severe respiratory cases.
- **WHO Webinar series on IPC & COVID 19** was promoted shared with relevant national professionals:
  - **21 April:** A model hospital for IPC and management of COVID-19 patients [Didier Pittet, University of Geneva Hospitals, Geneva, Switzerland]

- **28 April:** The SARS-CoV-2 virus modes of transmission and related IPC measures [John Conly, University of Calgary and Alberta Health Services, Calgary, Canada]
- **NEXT 5 May – HERE:** celebrating nurses and midwives for clean care at the age of COVID-19 [Benedetta Allegranzi, IPC Hub, WHO HQ Didier Pittet, University of Geneva Hospitals, Geneva, Switzerland]
- **NEXT 12 May – HERE:** Corona virus infections among health care workers: what we know about COVID-19 and what we have learned from other outbreaks [April Baller, WHO Health Emergencies, Geneva, Switzerland Seto Wing Hong, University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital, Hong Kong, China]

## Health Professionals

- **COVID -19 courses for health professionals:** Translation and adaptation of the following WHO on-line COVID – 19 courses for Health Professionals has been initiated:
  - Clinical Care Training for Respiratory Infections (SARI) in Macedonian language; <https://openwho.org/courses/severe-acute-respiratory-infection>
  - ePROTECT Respiratory Infections in Macedonian and Albanian languages; <https://openwho.org/courses/eprotect-acute-respiratory-infections>
  - How to put on and remove PPE in Macedonian and Albanian languages; <https://openwho.org/courses/IPC-PPE-EN>

## Case management

- **Solidarity Trial:** Generating Robust data needed to show which treatments are the most effective, by North Macedonia joining the WHO SOLIDARITY Trial. This will allow also receiving WHO donation of medicines **Ramdesivir and Fapinavir** for COVID19 severe patients. **WHO held a training meeting on Solidarity trial** to all those involved in the scheme from COVID19 treating hospitals.

## Planning, monitoring and evaluation of the COVID19 Response.

- **WHO is supporting the country in assessing the situation in view of eventual relaxation of restrictive public health measures.** WHO guidance is available on *“Considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19”* - [Access the publication](#) . This document provides guiding principles for adapting measures (loosening/ tightening). This will be followed by:
  - Indicators (criteria) for when measures can be adapted
  - Practical advice on how to adapt measures in key settings such as schools, workplaces etc.
 WHO emphasizes that there should be gradual alleviation, close monitoring and constant calibration of measures. **As measures are loosened, surveillance should be tightened. Different surveillance approaches (identification, confirmation, isolation, and contact identification and quarantine, event-based surveillance, sentinel ILI/SARI surveillance etc.) should be applied.**
- WHO continuing the roll out of the **Partners Platform for the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP):** Onboarding has taken place supporting North Macedonia to link with international support; the Country Preparedness and Response Plan has been uploaded for increasing capacity for 2000 COVID19 cases. The country is active on the platform <https://covid-19-response.org>
- SPRP includes health systems continuity, the Platform will have a **9th Pillar** for assessment of priority actions to maintain essential health services.
- **COVID-19 Health System Response Monitor (HSRM)** has been formally launched by WHO EURO and the European Observatory for Health systems. North Macedonia is participating. <https://www.covid19healthsystem.org/mainpage.aspx>

- A Ceremony for **launching of the USAID / WHO joint support** to the country to help contain and mitigate the COVID19 virus spread <https://un.mk/ceremony-for-launching-of-the-usaid-who-support-to-the-country-to-help-mitigate-the-spread-of-covid19/> was organized on 7 April 2020. This act of solidarity is directed mainly to support the health staff at the frontline of this fight against the virus: to ensure they have the means and the skills to protect themselves and control the infection all health care settings not only in treatment centers. A large part of the grant will also help the Institute of Public Health to continue its remarkable work in tracing and testing and early identification of the cases.

WHO continues to be actively engaged in:

- In risk communication targeted messages and developed many messages and infographics in national languages for display at MOH media channels and other. *WHO [Facebook/Twitter](#) ; MoH [Facebook/Twitter](#); [WHO Europe website for COVID-19](#)*
- Providing technical advice and support to many national and international partners for stepping up everyone's engagement in halting the virus spread and its impact on North Macedonia.
- Ensuring lab and testing tools are available for COVID19 related testing kits and PPE.
- Assisting the MOH in gaps and needs assessment and bridging those gaps for better health system coping and response.
- Establishing bilateral partnerships, resource mobilization, and joint plans to address gaps and needs of the MOH.
- Sustaining professional and technical knowledge of all health care workers in the country through the online WHO training course for COVID-19 for health care and infection control and protection (IPC) is now available in Macedonian Language on the WHO learning platform for Health workers. <https://openwho.org/>
- Tracking the epidemiological spread of the virus, supports early warning system and keep communities and frontline responders informed with the latest technical guidance.
- Contributing to the UN in the country to make sure that timely procurement takes place and supporting the newly set UN coordination mechanism for the COVID19. [1UN MK@facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/1UNMK/)

## NORTH MACEDONIA STRATEGIC RESPONSE AND ACTION

North Macedonia mobilized an all-of-government action to fight this new coronavirus, including scaling up emergency response mechanisms in all sectors. Actions and readjustments of measures are continuous and monitoring of the situation is ongoing on daily basis. The country is in declared national emergency Announced by the President of the Republic on 18 March 2020 and later renewed for another month.

On the health front, the country is working hard on now to ensure its COVID19 hospitalization surge capacity with the necessary personnel are in place with the influx of additional cases in recent days.

The Ministry of Health increased public health measures, such as rapid identification, diagnosis and management of the cases, identification and follow up of the contacts, infection prevention and control in health care settings, implementation of health measures for travelers, awareness-raising in the population and risk communication and counter misinformation as well as minimizing social and economic impact through multisectoral partnerships.

### IN THE PAST 24 HOURS:

- **Financial Health Protection:** The Health Insurance Fund introduced e-prescription for chronic conditions.
  - Starting 1<sup>st</sup> May, people with chronic conditions would be able to obtain or extend their prescriptions through a phone call and GPs are enabled to prescribe electronically.

### ➤ Risk Communication

- The Government expanded the COVID-19-related information channels to include “Коронавирус МК Coronavirus” on Viber and urged the citizens to join it for access to official and verified information related to COVID-19 response from their phones.
- The University Clinic for Hematology published advice and recommendation for its patients during COVID-19 crisis and established phone lines for doctors’ consultations. The details are available [here](#).

### ➤ Health Workforce

- 2,300 health professionals completed the **COVID-19 Response Training program** of Project HOPE and the Brown University. The training is based on the WHO’s recommendations for management of the spread of the disease and protection of the health professionals.

### ➤ Public Health

- For quick and easy contact with the teams who help vulnerable people in home isolation – [www.pomagame.mk](http://www.pomagame.mk) is available through a phone app.
- 51 people are caught breaking the curfew in the past 24 hours – 34 of them are detained.
- In the period between 22-26 March, The Inspection Council carried out a total of 2273 inspections: these were mostly done by the **Market Inspectorate** (1441) over the establishing order and discipline on the entrance and inside of the facilities and the prices of certain products. After these controls, 9 hospitality facilities were closed, 18 cafeterias were sealed and in 8 facilities in Ohrid the measure on mandatory face protection was not respected.
  - The **State Labor Inspectorate** carried 437 controls and imposed one criminal charge, 10 decisions and 28 warnings to employers who did not act upon the Government’s recommendations.
  - The **Food and Veterinary Agency**, while controlling markets, restaurants, butchers, production facilities and green markets (a total of 201), imposed 5 fines mainly for lack of written procedures and documentation and 8 decision for poor hygiene.
  - The **State Sanitary and Health Inspectorate** has carried out 108 inspections of private and public health constitutions and nursing homes regarding adhering to the protocols for protection of health professionals and for admitting infected COVID-19 patients. 385 permits for professional transport drivers are issued.
  - The **Transport Inspectorate** carried out 56 inspections, and it was concluded that traffic between the municipalities is reduced by 95%.
  - The **Drug Enforcement Agency** conducted 30 inspections of wholesalers and pharmacies, concluding that the rules in pharmacies and drug prices are in compliance with government recommendations.

### ➤ Education

- The Government adopted a set of measures to provide for smooth functioning of the educational system during the COVID-19 pandemic – the school year to be completed online and the graduating students are exempted from taking the graduation exam. The comprehensive set of measures can be accessed [here](#).
  - The school year to be completed online
  - The enrollment of first graders will begin in July, instead of May.
  - The mandates of the management and administration in the schools are extended, as well as the validity of the directors’ licenses.
  - The graduating students are exempted from taking the graduation exam.
  - The validity of the University study programs is extended for an additional year and the deadlines for accreditation, approving a new study program or higher education institutions are extended for 3 months after the termination of the state of emergency.

### ➤ Socioeconomic measures

- The Government announced improvements in the conditions of the measure for financial support of 14,500 denars per employee – with greater flexibility in the condition of maintaining the number of employees, opportunity to combine with the measure “50% subsidy contributions” for the most affected sectors and opportunity to transform aid into grant (non-refundable) funds. **A complete description of the updated economic measures** is outlined [here](#).
- The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy adjusted the social protection system to support to the most vulnerable citizens to cope with the challenges:
  - The access to the social protection system is eased
  - The criteria for access and use of the right to Guaranteed Minimum Assistance are relaxed
  - 30,000 households will continue to receive 1,000 denars of energy allowance in the period April-September
  - Children continue to receive education allowance
  - The access to compensation for disability and compensation for assistance and care from another person without follow-up consultations continues during the state of emergency
  - The availability of services for victims of domestic violence across the country has increased
  - In cooperation with UNICEF and the National Network against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, a free phone line is established for positive parenting – 075 230 530
  - In cooperation with UNDP, services for support of people with disabilities and elderly is established.
- Cabbage producers will get financial support of 3 denars per kilogram of sold cabbage for the period from 5 April-5 May 2020
- 140 workers who have been illegally laid-off during the crisis caused by coronavirus had been returned to work.
- In the period between April 15 and 28, 2020, the Helsinki Committee has received 24 reports of violations of workers’ rights, covering 552 employees. In the second half of April, the number of reports for work dismissals is decreasing, but the number of reports from workers whose salaries have not been paid or even reduced by 50% increased.

#### UN, DONATIONS AND PARTNER COORDINATION- COVID-19\*

To provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach in identifying and repurposing the available bilateral assistance to the COVID-19 response, all public administration bodies receiving bilateral donor assistance will report promptly to the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) the amount of funds available for each project. The SEA will then submit a formal request to the bilateral donors for the reuse of funds in accordance with the identified priority needs for COVID19.

*\*[ in the past 24 hours – earlier info available in previous Flash Updates]*

- **Austria** announced Aid and solidarity for North Macedonia and will provide urgently needed relief supplies to North Macedonia in the coming days through the EU's Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) to deal with the pandemic, namely tents, blankets, Electricity generators, lying mats, disposable bedding sets and hygiene packages and offered North Macedonia the treatment of patients in Austria.
- **The European Commission** announced yesterday over €3.3 billion of EU financial support mobilized jointly with the European Investment Bank to benefit the benefit of the Western Balkan’s citizens. This package aims to address the immediate health and resulting humanitarian needs of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as help with the social and economic recovery. In addition to the reinforced support, the Commission is in its contribution ahead of the EU-Western Balkans’ leaders meeting of 6 May 2020 also outlining the broad parameters of longer-term support to be presented later this year in the form of an Economic and Investment Plan for the region, the EC said in a press release – the full article is available [here](#).
- **The United States**, through USAID, is committing an additional \$330,000 to the COVID-19 response effort in North Macedonia through a direct grant to the Red Cross of North Macedonia. USAID’s \$330,000 grant to the Red Cross builds upon the U.S. Government’s \$1.1 million commitment to North Macedonia to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, USAID said Wednesday in a statement, The grant will help some of the most vulnerable segments of society whose daily lives have been upended by the virus, including the elderly, those with disabilities, single-parent and low-income families, and those that live in close quarters. The Red Cross will distribute 4,200 food kits, 4,200 hygiene kits, 3,000 disinfection kits, and 1,000 baby kits over the next three months. USAID will also assist the Red

Cross to increase the reach of its social and mental health services, which are available to all members of the public. The Red Cross will train volunteers in each of its 33 local chapters to assist anyone who is dealing with stress or other social challenges during this challenging time.

- **COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND:** The Ministry of Health will be procuring as of next week medical equipment including intensive care beds, ventilators, infusion pumps, mobile X-ray, etc., using funds from the COVID-19 response donation account that reached MKD 90 million collected to date.

## GAPS/NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

### ➤ **Technical needs at the health front:**

- Risk assessment for easing the curfews.
- Assess the socioeconomic impact on Health system during the crisis and after the crisis
- 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 use of eHealth and telemedicine to improve and facilitate population preventive interventions
- Strengthen epidemiological capacity
- Enhance planning capacity for transition strategy after lockdown.

### ➤ **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 vulnerable ones.

### ➤ **Challenges:**

- Procurement : Access to local or international supplies and mainly respirators for the critical needs identified because of international shortages.
- Shortage in health workforce as the situation progresses
- Ensuring sustainability of the health facilities and health care during and after the crisis.
- Outreach and social support to the vulnerable
- Ensuring continuity of treatment and access to regular health care for all citizens including the vulnerable groups with other diseases and pathologies.
- Fighting Isolation and scaling up community engagement in the regions
- Compliance of the citizens to instructions of the government and self-isolation