



COVID-19 - Coronavirus disease 2019

NORTH MACEDONIA

FLASH UPDATE 1

18 March 2020 -Rev*

Data as reported by authorities by 21:00, 18 March 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

Epidemiology update*

As of 18 March 2020, a cumulative total of 43 COVID-19 cases were reported in North Macedonia including the patient that recovered.

11 new cases have been confirmed in the last 24 hours in the Republic of North Macedonia. Out of the 11 new cases, 4 are health professionals from Debar. All the confirmed patients are in stable condition; two have simple Pneumonia.

Currently, 22 additional individuals are being tested as part of the process for early screening of coronavirus that started in several municipalities. Results will be known tomorrow.

Latest national measures

- ✓ The President of the Republic of North Macedonia just declared national emergency for COVID-19 on all the country territory for 30 days. But no restriction of movement.
- ✓ The Government launched today economic measures to support small business affected by the outbreak.
- ✓ The Minister of Foreign Affairs asked citizens not to travel, but in the last 24 hours 1,331 citizens left the country. They will sign a statement of not returning for next 3 months.
- ✓ The office of the Skopje Orthodox Diocese, in addition to the recommendations by the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid Archbishopric for the territory of the Skopje’s Orthodox Diocese, has adopted additional COVID-19 preventative measures.
- ✓ MOH and the City of Skopje agreed to increase the number of local buses in Skopje in the morning and afternoon hours to reduce crowding.

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

total (new) cases in the last 24 hours

North Macedonia

43 confirmed (11) *

0 deaths

1 recovered

Globally

179 112 confirmed (11 526)

7426 deaths (475)

Western Pacific Region

91 779 confirmed (289)

3357 deaths (23)

European Region

64 189 (8507)

3108 deaths (428)

South-East Asia

508 confirmed (124)

9 deaths (2)

Eastern Mediterranean Region

16 784 confirmed (330)

873 deaths (3)

Regions of the Americas

4910 confirmed (2234)

68 deaths (18)

African Region

228 confirmed (42)

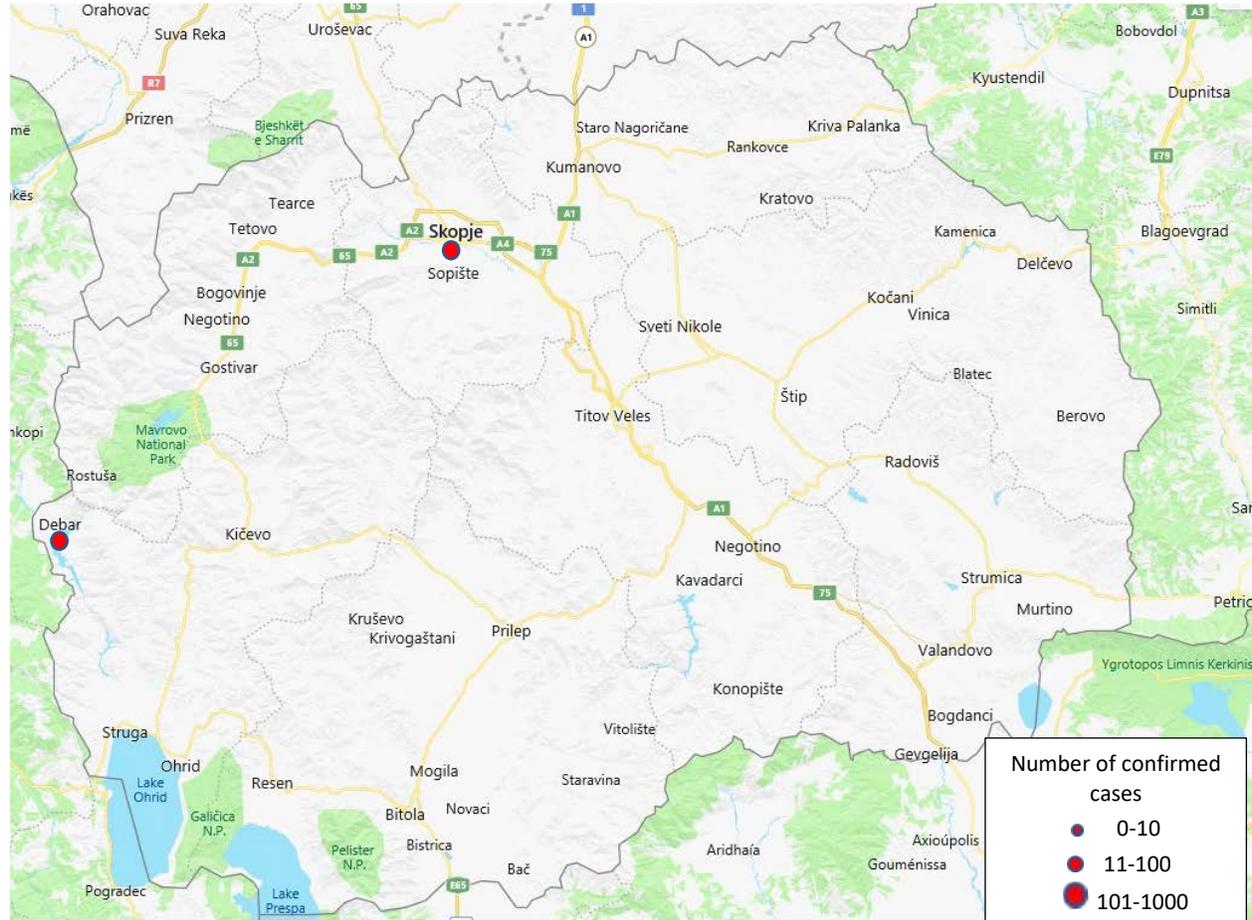
4 deaths (1)

WHO RISK ASSESSMENT

All levels Very high

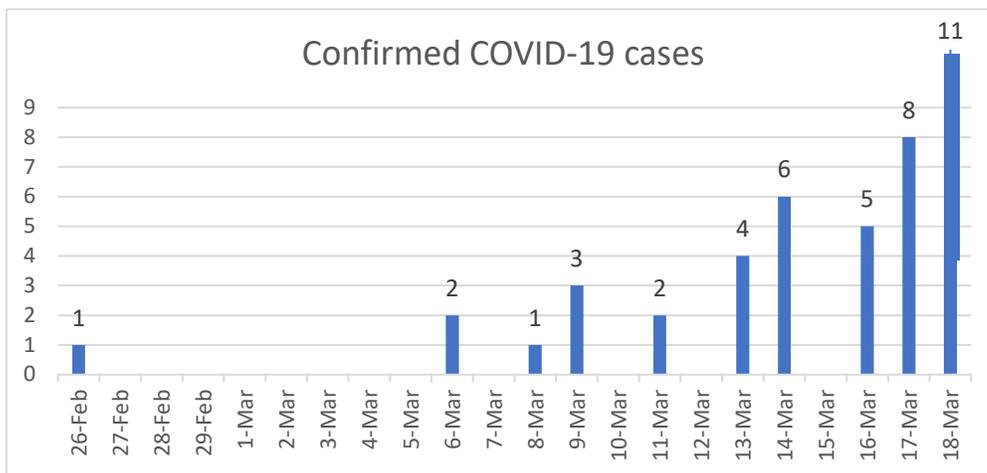
SURVEILLANCE

Figure 1. Municipalities in North Macedonia with reported confirmed cases of COVID-19, 18 March 2020



<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/685d0ace521648f8a5beeee1b9125cd>

Figure 2. Epidemic curve of confirmed COVID-19 cases reported in North Macedonia (n=43), by date of report through 18 March 2020



PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

WHO ROLE AND ACTION

WHO is the lead UN agency for Health and main technical and health policy advisor to the government on COVID-19 containment and mitigation. **Western Balkan including North Macedonia is one of the priority countries for the WHO European Region. WHO works in coordination closely with other UN agencies as per the UN reform.**

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.

WHO Globally is informing the public through [daily situation reports](#) and dashboards displaying real-time data: [WHO Health Emergency dashboard](#); [WHO COVID-19 situation dashboard in European Region](#).

WHO action in COVID-19 outbreak in North Macedonia is to limit virus spread, protect health and the health workers at the frontline, preserve the health care system capacity and its sustainability to respond.

- ✓ The **country strategic preparedness and response plan for the next 3 months and** Contingency Plan for COVID – 19 were drafted on 14 March 2020 with the IHR team members and the WHO consultant. The plan provides strategic interventions in line with 8 pillars. A few donors have confirmed readiness to support the urgent needs in health. The world Bank has written officially to the ministry of health pledging support.
- ✓ Local purchase of **protective equipment** was made today in support of the national virology lab. There is still a huge need in PPE in the health system.
- ✓ We are awaiting the completion of the **translation to Macedonian language of online WHO trainings** for COVID-19 for health care and ICP to disseminate it to all Health workers in MKD <https://openwho.org/>
- ✓ **A new WHO animated wash hands and awareness clip was released today** in Turkish, Albanian, Macedonian and English languages.

COVID-19 could be regarded as an opportunity to upscale and accelerate the implementation of the **IHR Core Capacities**. Based on the Joint External Evaluation that was carried out in 2019 some areas require immediate strengthening: develop and implement a national IPC program and strategy for healthcare associated infections and strengthen biosafety and biosecurity.

NEW GOVERNMENT MEASURES ON 18 MARCH 2020

North Macedonia mobilized an all-of-government action to fight this new coronavirus, including scaling up emergency response mechanisms in all sectors. We have seen recently a positive society response and compliance as well as more trust in the government protective measures and instructions for social distancing. MOH has started a vigorous risk communication campaign in social media, on TV and other. Actions and readjustments of measures are continuous and monitoring of the situation is ongoing on daily basis. On the health front, the country is working hard now to ensure its hospitalization surge capacity with the necessary personnel are in place in case of larger community-based transmission.

The Steering committee was formed as governmental body for coordination and management within a national crisis management system composed of: Ministers of: Interior, Health, Transport and Communications, Defense, Foreign Affairs and the Head of the Assessment Group are also meeting ad hoc with the Minister of Health and the Operational Committee for decision making on highest level.

Ministry of Health is coordinating the response through its responsible expert committees:

1. Infectious diseases commission as a technical expertise to MOH
2. IHR multisectoral commission
3. Operational Committee – Task Force for COVID-19

- ✓ The **President of the Republic of North Macedonia declared today a national emergency for COVID-19** on all territory in North Macedonia for the duration of 30 days. This measure aims at flattening the curve of the epidemic in order to release the pressure off the health care services, declared today the minister of health. During a state of emergency the Government can adopt decrees that have the force of law, ie will be able to execute both Legislative and Executive powers. This would facilitate the work of the Government in times of crisis and decisions for the benefit of the citizens will be faster and more efficient. At this time, there is no decision for curfew or restriction of movement and citizens will be additionally informed if and when any restriction of movement will be introduced. <http://pretsedatel.mk/en/decreed-for-state-of-emergency-addressing-remarks-by-president-pendarovski/>
- ✓ The Government of North Macedonia announced **financial relief measures** for businesses affected by the epidemic as part of the national response to COVID-19:
 - Direct financial support of liquidity of mirco, small and medium-sized companies by the Development Bank of North Macedonia (€5.7 million).
 - Subsidies for payment of contributions for employees in the transport, tourism and service sectors for the months of April, June and July 2020.
- ✓ The Minister of **Foreign Affairs urged citizens not to travel**. In the last 24 hours 1,331 citizens left the country. There is a decision to make them sign on a statement that they will not return in the next 3 months.
- ✓ The office of the Skopje Orthodox Diocese, following the recommendations of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid Archbishopric for the territory of the Skopje’s Orthodox Diocese, has adopted additional COVID-19 preventative measures:

- All religious practices prior and during Easter holidays of the parishes should be stopped or postponed. Those that cannot be postponed to be conducted in narrow circles.
 - Funerals and memorials to be performed only in the open or at the graveyards with the closest family members only.
 - The use of church halls and clerical offices for meetings, religious lessons, board meetings and other activities is ceased.
 - During the worship services, the believers are advised to keep the recommended distance between them.
 - The monasteries should not allow worshiper visits, unless there is a specific need.
 - Sunday's and festive Holy lithurgies should be held outdoors.
- ✓ MOH and the City of Skopje agreed to increase the number of local buses in Skopje in the morning and afternoon hours to reduce the crowding.
 - ✓ As of 18 March 2020, additional doctors from the University Clinic for Pulmonology are assigned to Debar General Hospital
 - ✓ The Skopje International Airport will be effectively closed as of 00:00 a.m. on Thursday March 19, 2020, except for state, military medical and emergency flights.
 - ✓ About 200 citizens located at the Hungary-Sebian border crossing are quarantined in the military barracks Pepelishte in Krivolak – Food support is given through UNDP - 18 March 2020.
 - ✓ New COVID-19 testing guidelines were adopted whereby testing is performed only on persons who have symptoms of acute respiratory infection, or who meet the WHO suspected case definition of COVID-19. In addition, WHO recommends testing for SARI cases that are negative for influenza and other respiratory pathogens. Laboratory capacities at IPH are estimated at around 100 tests per day to be performed in three shifts. As the IPH Virology Laboratory is the only reference laboratory for COVID-19 in the country, it is not recommended to extend the testing capacity to other institutions in order to reduce the risk of spreading infection to health facilities. In order for a laboratory to conduct COVID-19 testing, it is obligatory to meet the standards of facilities, equipment, space, trained personnel.

Community and NGOs:

- ✓ **The Macedonian Red Cross is active in support of vulnerable groups** especially in the lock down areas like in the region of Debar and Zupa. Red Cross supports the elderly, migrants, roma populations and others. Red Cross has posted phone numbers for the mobile teams who assist the elderly:
<https://www.facebook.com/CrvenKrstNaRepublikaSevernaMakedonija/photos/a.1420159074866847/2547949732087770/?type=3&theater>

Hotline

Hotlines are established for general information for measures, health care and other information related to COVID-19 to be referred to the “Alo Doctor” Call Center and the emergency hotlines of the Centers for Public Health/ Institute for Public Health are to be used exclusively for suspected and symptomatic cases, who have returned from high and medium risk countries, or have been in contact with a

confirmed case – 16 March 2020. Foreign affairs has established their own hotlines for stranded nationals at borders or in other countries.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

COVID-19 general information	
“Alo Doctor” Call Center	02 15 123
In case of symptoms and asymptomatic travelers	
CPH Bitola	071 261 330
CPH Veles	071 219 278
CPH Gevgelija	078 545 444
CPH Kochani	071 373 913
CPH Kumanovo	070 215 851
CPH Ohrid	070 723 029
CPH Prilep	076 475 747
CPH Skopje	071 289 614
CPH Strumica	072 235 543
CPH Tetovo	075 240 464
RU Gostivar	076 365 161
CPH Shtip	078 365 613
IPH Skopje	078 387 194
Psychological support	
Parents of preschool and school children	072 912 676
Self-isolated adults	072 919 009
Citizens of municipalities Debar and Center Zhupa	070 241 807
Red Cross mobile teams for elderly support	
Red Cross Center	070 297 166
Red Cross Kisela Voda	071 349 225
Red Cross Chair	070 208 383
Red Cross Karpos	071 349 230
Red Cross Gazi Baba	071 243 078
Team for support of homeless people	02 3096 227
Foreign Affairs	
Regular line, Viber and WhatsApp	075 273 732
Regular line	075 446 647
Regular line, Viber and WhatsApp	070 282 078
WHO	
Facebook/Twitter	@WHOMKD
Ministry of Health	
Facebook/Twitter	@zdravstvomk