



COVID-19 - Coronavirus disease 2019

NORTH MACEDONIA

FLASH UPDATE 2

19 March 2020

Data as reported by authorities by 19:00, 19 March 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

Epidemiology update

6 new cases have been confirmed in the last 24 hours in the Republic of North Macedonia. A 4-year- old child returning from UK is among the latest COVID-19 cases.

As of 19 March 2020, there is a total of 49 COVID-19 cases reported in North Macedonia including the patient who recovered.

31 of the confirmed cases are from municipality of Debar, 16 are from Skopje, one is from Shtip and one is from Gostivar. All cases have a connection to travel or contact with travelers.

All the confirmed patients are in stable condition.

Latest national measures

- ✓ The General Hospital 8th September in Skopje is designated facility for treatment of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and who need additional health services and interventions.
- ✓ National authorities are working together to improve the access to the Clinical Center and the ICU.
- ✓ The Skopje International Airport is closed as of 00:00 a.m on Thursday March 19, 2020, except for state, military medical and emergency flights.
- ✓ The President of the Republic of North Macedonia had declared national emergency for COVID-19 on all the country territory for 30 days as of 18 March 2020. But no restriction of movement as of today.
- ✓ An 8-pillar country Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan is developed to be approved by the government.

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

total (new) cases in the last 24 hours

North Macedonia

49 confirmed (6)

0 deaths

1 recovered

Globally

191 127 confirmed (15 123)

7807 deaths (786)

Western Pacific Region

91 845 confirmed (312)

3357 deaths (23)

European Region

74 760 (10 911)

3352 deaths (604)

South-East Asia

538 confirmed (63)

9 deaths (1)

Eastern Mediterranean Region

18 060 confirmed (1552)

1010 deaths (140)

Regions of the Americas

4979 confirmed (2243)

68 deaths (18)

African Region

223 confirmed (42)

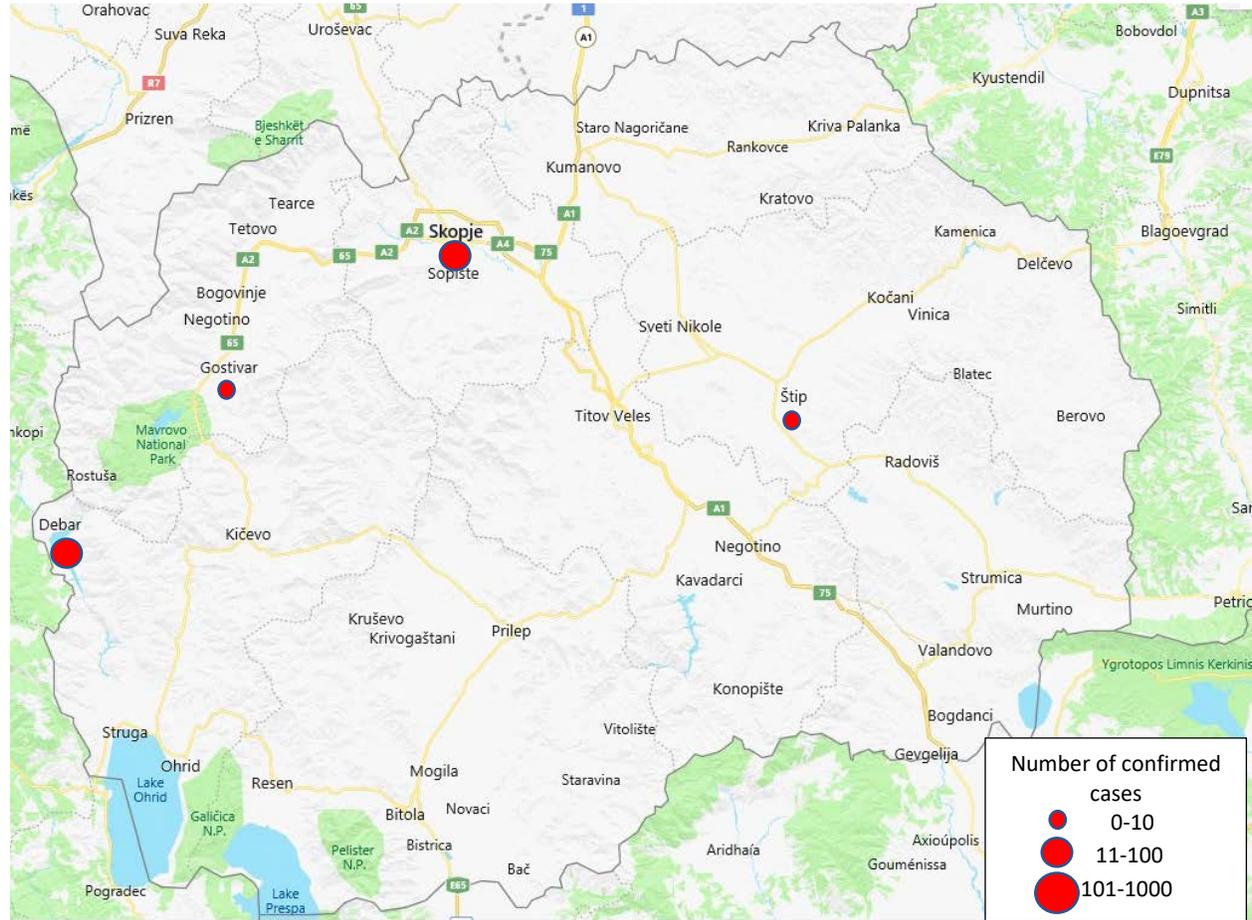
4 deaths (0)

WHO RISK ASSESSMENT

All levels Very high

SURVEILLANCE

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



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

Figure 2. Newly confirmed COVID-19 cases as reported in North Macedonia (n=49), by date of report through 19 March 2020

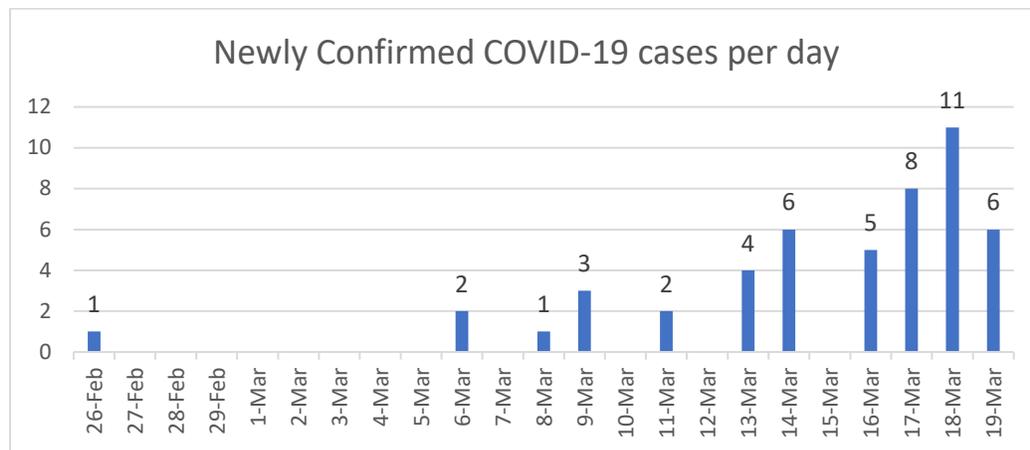
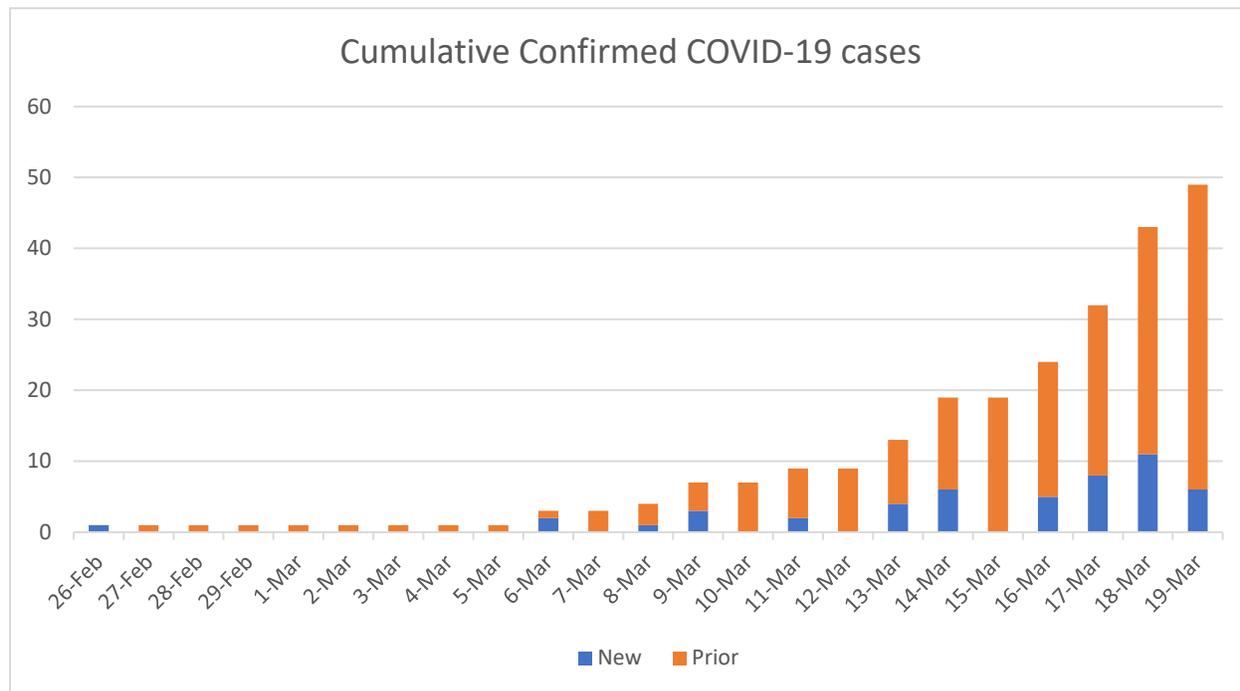


Figure 3. Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases reported in North Macedonia (n=49), by date of report through 19 March 2020 (including recovered)



To appreciate the load on the health sector we produced figure 3 with cumulative number of confirmed cases distributed per day.

To be noted that the age of the reported cases ranges from 4 to 87 years with almost half of the patients being above 50 years of age and the highest attack rate being in persons above 60 years of age. Sex distribution is 23 males and 26 females.

According to the risk assessment by WHO on a global level and at European Region level, the risk is very high. According to the risk categorization by WHO in MKD it is estimated that:

- ❖ Debar is in stage 4 (widespread transmission in the community).
- ❖ Skopje is in phase 3 (localized transmission).
- ❖ The remaining part of the Republic of North Macedonia is in phase 2 (sporadic cases).

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.
- ✓ WHO continues to provide **protective equipment** in support of the national virology lab and the clinics however there is still a huge gap in PPE in the health system.
- ✓ The **translation to Macedonian language of online WHO trainings** for COVID-19 <https://openwho.org/> for health care and ICP is completed ; A plan to disseminate it to all Health workers in MKD is underway
- ✓ **A new WHO animated wash hands and awareness clip was released** 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.

GOVERNMENT MEASURES in past 24 hours

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 General Hospital 8th September in Skopje was designated today as facility for treatment of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and with additional medical pathologies requiring additional care. An assessment should be made of the conditions and opportunities for proper isolation space in the Hospital "8th September", so that their capacities can be used to treat patients suspected for COVID-19 infection, who would need intensive cardiological, surgical and other treatment. An operational plan for procedures for admission of this type of patient is being prepared.
- ✓ Clinic for Infectious Diseases to arrange treatment and home treatment of persons from Skopje that are positive for COVID-19 and which are not hospitalized at the clinic. A report on COVID-19 patients treated at home in Debar and Skopje is underway.

GAPS/NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

- 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
- Multi-sectoral partner coordination mechanism for COVID19 is needed.

Challenges:

- Protecting health care workers who are not working in the COVID-19 designated facilities.
- Procurement : Access to local or international supplies and mainly respirators for the critical needs identified because of international shortages.
- Shortage in health workforce if the situation progresses
- Ensuring treatment for all citizens including the vulnerable groups with other diseases and pathologies.
- Isolation and mental health of the elderly and disabled.

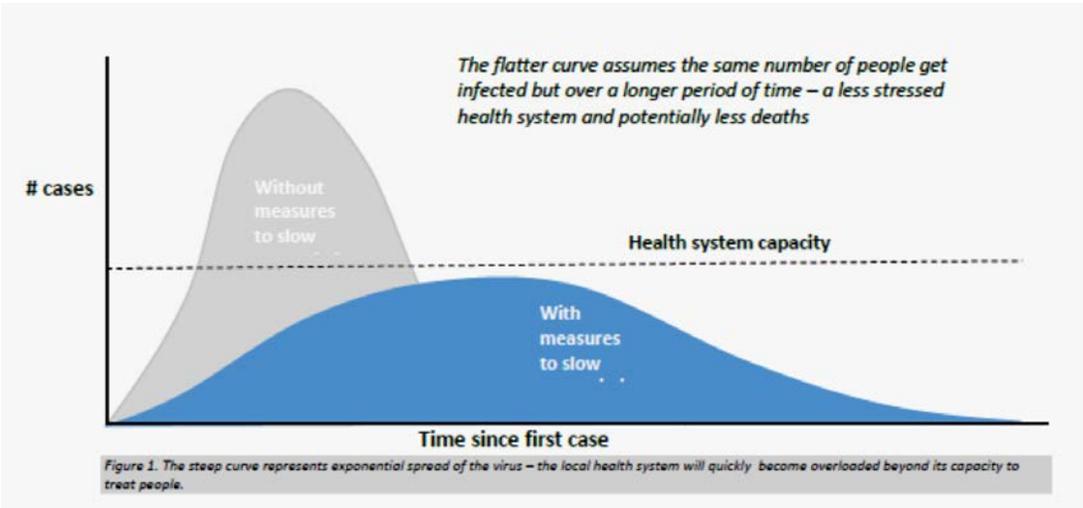
Hotline

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

The outbreak progresses at different speeds in different countries, depending on demographics and other factors. We may not be able to interrupt transmission, but we need to work hard to protect the health system that can become overloaded beyond the capacity to treat people. This can happen by keeping social distancing, closure of crowded places and protecting the health care workers.



NGOs have a big role to play: With North Macedonia’s capital Skopje largely shut down amid the coronavirus emergency, Red Cross volunteers have been delivering essential supplies to elderly people and those who have to remain in isolation.



Photo Credit: BIRN