



COVID-19 - Coronavirus disease 2019
NORTH MACEDONIA
FLASH UPDATE 3
20 March 2020

Data as reported by authorities by 19:00, 20 March 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

Epidemiology update

22 new cases have been confirmed in the last 24 hours. As of 20 March 2020, there is a total of 70 COVID-19 cases reported in North Macedonia including one recovered. All patients in stable condition except one on mechanical respirator. The registered patients are from Skopje, Debar, Gostivar, Shtip and Ohrid.

A large number of tests is underway as the Ministry has stepped up its testing operations. The country is still in **declared state of national emergency as per President decision**.

Latest national measures

- ✓ Minister of Health declared: The only way to end the spread of covid-19 is self-isolation, i.e. quarantine. In this battle, everyone should participate.
- ✓ Forbidden for next 14 days: Access of persons and vehicles to the Park Forest "Vodno" from 6:00pm to the next day; gathering citizens in public places in groups of more than five persons; Ministry of Interior (MOI) will control in private houses and villas that organize parties and gatherings (in the settlements of Sopsishte and Sonje near Skopje); training and exams in the driver training schools;
- ✓ All markets, pharmacies, banks and postal service must provide a check service in order to control their entry and number of persons and control the distance between people to be at least 2 meters;

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

total (new) cases in the last 24 hours

North Macedonia

70 confirmed (22)
0 deaths
1 recovered

Globally

209 839 confirmed (16 556)
8778 deaths (828)

Western Pacific Region

92 333 confirmed (488)
3377 deaths (20)

European Region

87 108 (10 221)
4084 deaths (591)

South-East Asia

657 confirmed (119)
23 deaths (14)

Eastern Mediterranean Region

19 518 confirmed (1430)
1161 deaths (150)

Regions of the Americas

9144 confirmed (4166)
119 deaths (50)

African Region

367 confirmed (132)
7 deaths (3)

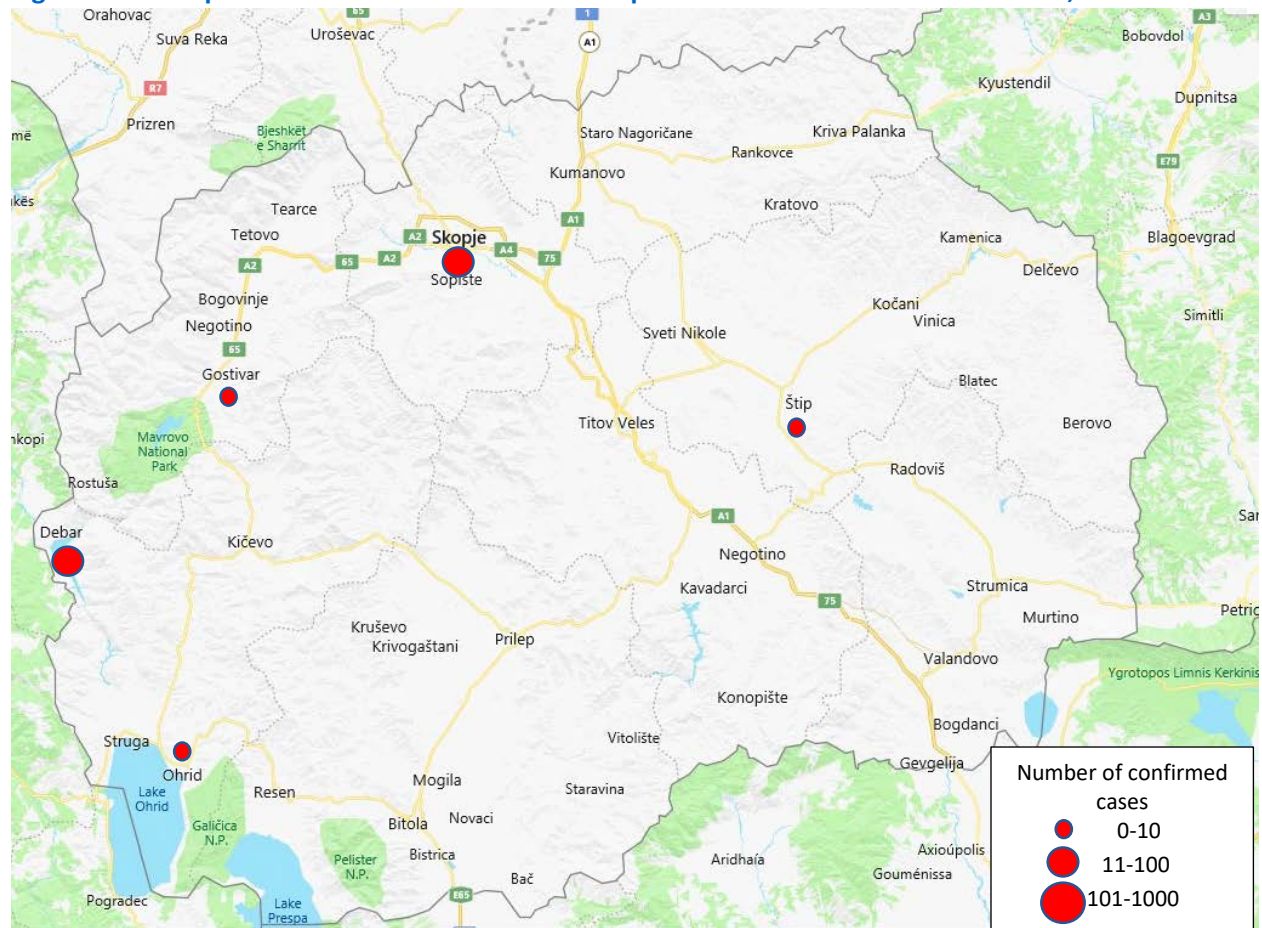
WHO RISK ASSESSMENT

All levels Very high

- ✓ Ministry of Agriculture is negotiating with livestock companies to limit the export of lambs and restricts the export of wheat and wheat flour.
- ✓ The Commission for Infectious Diseases recommended to unify the capacities of the laboratories at the Institute of Public Health and at the hospital Zan Mitrev.
- ✓ All employers in North Macedonia have been advised to organize working from home
- ✓ The Skopje airport remains closed.
- ✓ Criminal charges are brought against those not respecting the decisions of the government for closure and social distancing.

SURVEILLANCE

Figure 1. Municipalities in North Macedonia with reported confirmed cases of COVID-19, 20 March 2020



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

The disaggregated data of the confirmed COVID-19 cases through 19 March 2020 could be accessed at the Institute of Public Health (<http://www.iph.mk/info-covid-19-20-03-2020/>)

The incidence rate is calculated at 6,5 cases per 100 000 people as of 19 March 2020.

In terms of distribution by sex, 32/67 are females and 35/67 are male as officially reported on 19 March 2020.

The age of confirmed COVID-19 patients ranges from 4 to 87 years with a median of 48 years. The greatest proportion of the affected people are above 60 years old – 18/67 (26.9%), while the highest age-specific incidence of 4,8 per 100 000 people is detected among people ages 40-49.

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.

- ✓ **WHO is supporting the development of list of critical needs for the next three months for the health sector and coordinating with partners the support of the identified needs.**
- ✓ **A few partners have confirmed readiness to support the urgent needs in health according to the requirements of the country COVID – 19 Contingency Plan for preparedness and response.**
- ✓ **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.

- ✓ 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/>

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 20 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

- ✓ Minister of Health informed that many countries stopped the export of respiratory machines and that MOH is expecting to still be able to complete the procurement in short time. It was confirmed today that China reserved 200 respiratory machines for North Macedonia.
- ✓ As of 20 March 2020, a total of 888 tests have been performed at the laboratory at the Institute of Public Health and as of now there are 1 400 tests in the pipeline.
- ✓ Three companies from Prilep will make over 100,000 face masks: to be distributed free of charge to the citizens of Prilep and other cities in the country. The first 1,000 that were to be distributed today, and if needed, are sterilized at the general hospital. Towers and Fashion Link company declared they are ready to sew 2,000-3,000 masks a day.

- ✓ Local authorities are appealing for profitable businesses from the city to get involved in donating food and personal hygiene products to the vulnerable category of citizens and socially disadvantaged families. The Red Cross branch organization does not have sufficient stock.
- ✓ All vehicles are disinfected at the entrance to Prilep from Bitola, Krushevo, Makedonski Brod and at the entrance to Plenvar. Just like the streets and kindergartens and more institutions and schools.
- ✓ 76 returnees from high-risk countries are under quarantine and under constant police surveillance. Four did not comply with the measures and criminal charges were filed.
- ✓ A **new call- center** placed at the Bucharest Polyclinic is in preparation , equipment is installed, optic cable is being placed, it may start operating on Saturday. There are 6 lines, and 4 more can be added in order to function with 10 lines . Doctors from the Center for Public Health – Skopje will respond to these hot lines..

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.

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

➤ Masks

WHO do not advice people make masks on their own. Masks need to follow certain specifications to be effective. Cotton masks are not proven to be effective against COVID19

In addition, wearing a mask when you are not sick or not caring for a sick one can be counterproductive: it can facilitate infection if not properly handled and give you a sense of false security diverting from other key measures like hand and respiratory hygiene and physical distancing.

Only people who are sick, care for others who are sick, or healthcare workers should wear masks. A medical mask is not required for members of the public who do not have respiratory symptoms.

See WHO advice on the use of masks in the community, during home care and in healthcare settings in the context of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak: <https://www.who.int/publications->

[detail/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](#)

See WHO COVID-19 advice to public: www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public

➤ **Is everyone at risk for COVID 19?**

The virus that causes COVID-19 can infect people of all ages, but the risk of severe disease gradually increases with age starting from around 40 years. Evidence to date suggests that two groups of people are at a higher risk of getting severe COVID-19 disease. These are older people (that is people over 60 years old); and those with underlying medical conditions (such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer). It's important that adults in this age range protect themselves and in turn protect others that may be more vulnerable.

➤ **Does the world have enough supplies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? What is WHO doing to help?**

WHO is working with governments, industry and the [Pandemic Supply Chain Network](#) to boost production and secure allocations for critically affected and at-risk countries (see [news release](#)).

WHO has shipped PPE to 68 countries and 1.5 million diagnostic kits to 120 countries and is working finalize arrangements with suppliers in China to export to WHO.

In addition, WHO has identified producers with over-capacity, and is finalizing specifications, and coordinating shipments, to refill warehouse to ship PPE to whoever needs it most. It is WHO's aim is to build a continuous pipeline to ensure continuity of supply.

Many companies produce diagnostic kits, but WHO can only buy kits that have been evaluated independently. WHO has worked with FIND to significantly increase capacity for evaluation by contracting additional labs to do the evaluation

WHO has warned that severe and mounting disruption to the global supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) is putting lives at risk from the new coronavirus and other infectious diseases. [WHO guidance](#) calls for the rational and appropriate use of PPE in healthcare settings, and the effective management of supply chains.

WHO has published [the Rational use of personal protective equipment for COVID-19](#). This document summarizes WHO recommendations for the appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) in health care and community settings, including the handling of cargo.

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
National Epidemiological Information:	
http://www.iph.mk/info-covid-19-20-03-2020/	