



**COVID-19 - Coronavirus disease 2019**

**NORTH MACEDONIA**

**FLASH UPDATE 4**

**21 March 2020**

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

**HIGHLIGHTS**

**Epidemiology update**

9 new cases have been confirmed in the last 24 hours in the Republic of North Macedonia making the total of 85 COVID-19 cases including the patient that recovered. The registered patients are from Skopje, Debar, Gostivar, Shtip, Ohrid and Kavadarci. Geographical extension is noted.

All patients are stable, except the one on mechanical respiration and three patients with severe pneumonia. The non-hospitalized, are receiving home care and are in constant communication with the clinicians.

On Wednesday 18 March 2020, North Macedonia's president Stevo Pendarovski declared a 30-day nationwide state of emergency. All borders and the airport are still closed.

**Latest national measures**

- ✓ Government decided to start curfew as of tomorrow 22 March 2020, restricting the movement of all citizens between 21:00 and 06:00 every day.
- ✓ The Call Center (0800 002 03) for questions related to COVID-19 is functional as of today, in the Primary Health Care Center Skopje.
- ✓ Based on its legal prerogatives and responsibilities for coordination of all foreign assistance, the Secretariat for European Affairs will coordinate the work of the COVID19 Technical Working Group and identify, systematize and prioritize all needs for goods, services and financial resources to address the consequences of COVID19.

In view of better coordination, two focal points from the SEA, Kalinka Gaber, State Secretary and Arlinda Beqiri, Head of

**SITUATION IN NUMBERS**

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

**North Macedonia**

85 confirmed (9)

0 deaths

1 recovered

**Globally**

234 073 confirmed (24 247)

9840 deaths (1061)

**Western Pacific Region**

93 349 confirmed (1016)

3405 deaths (28)

**European Region**

104 591 confirmed (17 506)

4899 deaths (816)

**South-East Asia**

918 confirmed (261)

31 deaths (8)

**Eastern Mediterranean Region**

20 759 confirmed (1254)

1312 deaths (151)

**Regions of the Americas**

13 271 confirmed (4104)

178 deaths (57)

**African Region**

473 confirmed (106)

8 deaths (1)

**WHO RISK ASSESSMENT**

All levels Very high

Sector are nominated. All requests coming from the Government will be consolidated and communicated from one source, an ad-hoc Technical Working Group.

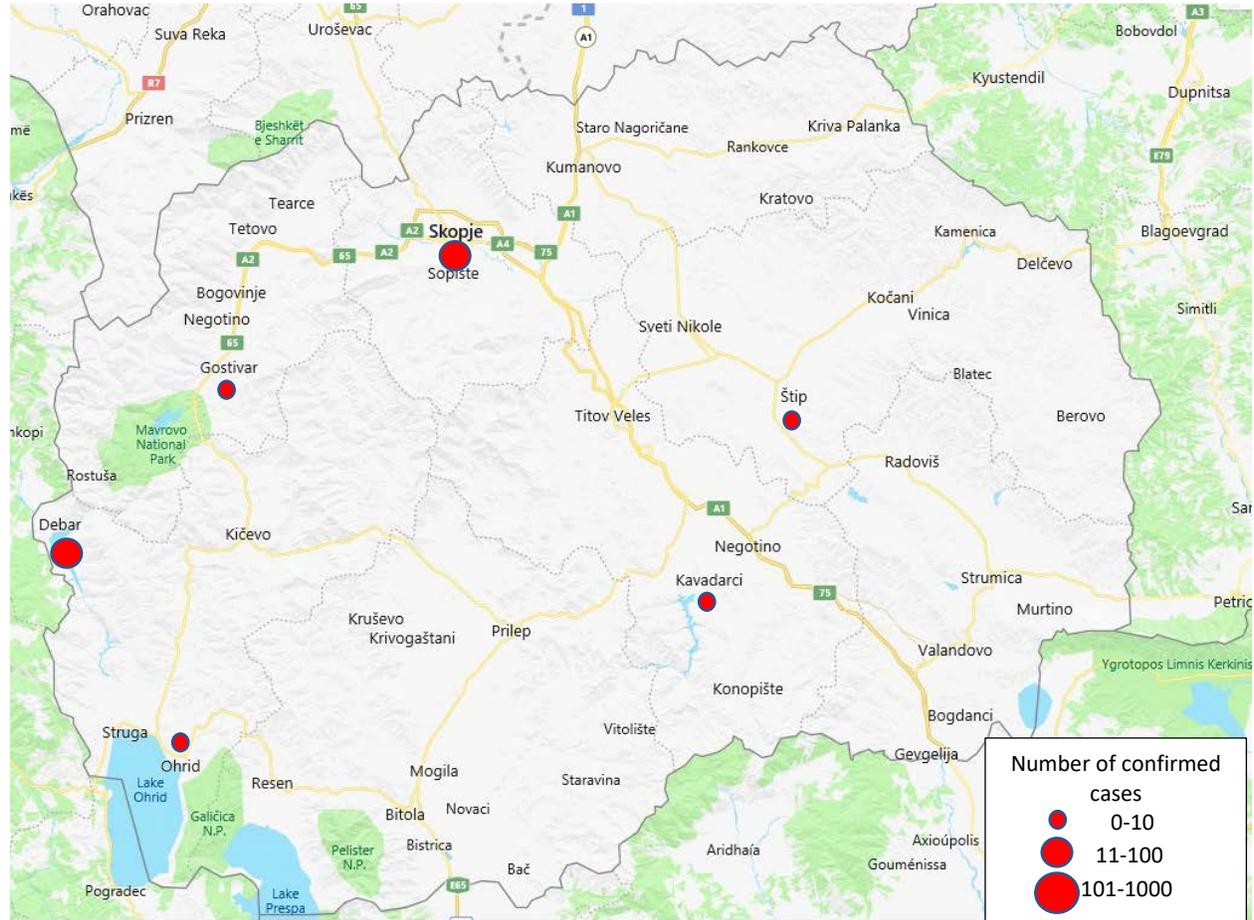
- ✓ North Macedonia registered an increase in Coronavirus rule-breakers who will be charged and presented to trial. Justice Minister Renata Deskoska declared that the entire legal system is now working on detecting and sanctioning those who break health instructions, and that it will expedite legal procedures in such cases.
- ✓ All those who do not comply with the measure of self-isolation should be placed in state quarantine and appropriate action be taken against them, including presented to trial and payment of their own costs to state quarantine. The compulsory state quarantine also includes all Macedonian citizens who returned with the so-called humanitarian flights.
- ✓ Ministry of the Interior is informing any citizen leaving the country to sign a personal statement of traveling on own responsibility and that state authorities cannot guarantee timely assistance to return to the country.
- ✓ The government decided to extend the validity of passports, IDs and driver's licenses, which have expired, during the state of emergency.
- ✓ Minister of foreign affairs has given a deadline Tomorrow, March 22 Sunday, until 18 pm, for citizens abroad and who need help to return to the country, to register in diplomatic or consular missions or through the crisis team in MFA (<https://mfa.gov.mk/>). This is to organize charter return flights.
- ✓ EEAS report finds Western Balkans targeted by Coronavirus disinformation campaigns; <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/eeas-special-report-disinformation-on-the-coronavirus-short-assessment-of-the-information-environment/>



Skopje's city centre looks abandoned amid coronavirus fears. Photo: BIRN

## SURVEILLANCE

**Figure 1. Municipalities in North Macedonia with reported confirmed cases of COVID-19, 21 March 2020**



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

The disaggregated data of the confirmed COVID-19 cases through 20 March 2020 could be accessed at the Institute of Public Health (<http://www.iph.mk/covid19-21-3-2020/>).

The official report of the institute of public health as of 20.4.2020 indicate an incidence rate of the COVID19 of 4.1 per 100,000 population with no difference between males and females. Most cases are registered in Skopje and Debar. Most of patients are older than 60 years old (22.4%), yet the highest specific incidence 6.5 / 100,000 population are registered in people aged 50-59.

### Risk Assessment of COVID19 in North Macedonia

The WHO risk assessment at the global and European level of COVID-19 further states that the risk is very high. According to the WHO risk categorization, it is estimated that:

- Debar is in Phase 4 (widespread community transmission).
- Skopje is in phase 3 (localized transmission).
- The rest of the Republic of Northern 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.**

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.

- ✓ **WHO is supporting MOH estimating its needs and preparing list of critical needs of protective supplies** for the next three months for the health sector and coordinating with partners the support of the identified needs – **Awaited on Monday 23 March 2020**
- ✓ The **country strategic preparedness and response plan and Contingency Plan for COVID – 19** were drafted on 14 March 2020 with the IHR team members and the WHO consultant based on a scenario of 100 cases. **The plan underestimated the rapidity of spread of the disease and a new plan will be made to cover for 2000 patients taking into consideration the capacity of treatment in the country.** The plan provides strategic interventions in line with 8 pillars. The world Bank has written officially to the ministry of health pledging support. A few donors have confirmed readiness to support the urgent needs in health.
- ✓ 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/> will be ready on Tuesday 24 March 2020.

### COVID19 UN AND PARTNER COORDINATION

- ✓ WHO contributes to the efforts the UN in the country to make sure that timely procurement takes place and also supports newly set UN coordination mechanism for the COVID19, where UN RC takes the lead in order to streamline joint response efforts to the COVID-19 and provide support to the people and government of North Macedonia as effectively as possible, in collaboration with the two DPMs, Mila Carovska and Bujar Osmani.

## 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

- ✓ Restrictions of movement announced by the Government: starting a curfew as of tomorrow 22 March 2020, restricting the movement of all citizens between 21:00 and 06:00 every day, is with Exceptions: for emergency medical assistance and people on dialysis (maximum number of people who can accompany the person is 2); members of the Army, police, fire department and the public workers for communal hygiene.
- ✓ The number of pharmacies on duty will be restricted and Taxis on duty will only to transport people to/from a health facility or pharmacy. There will be no public transport in the restricted hours and in general decreased intercity public transport by 50%.
- ✓ As of Monday, 23 March 2020, in addition to the phone lines of the Institute of Public Health, the Centers for Public Health and the Call Center, the patients will also have the option to call their GPs. The GPs will be able to schedule testing at the two policlinics for the suspected COVID-19 patients, indication that will be established through the electronic algorithm in Moj Termin.

## 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 in process but slow because government is very busy with the COVID19 situation.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Protecting health care workers** and the health care facilities is the utmost priority including those health workforce 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: because of Increased prices of PPE; Masks and respirators difficult to procure; Supply problems for few medicines/ API: Chloroquine, Lopinavir-ritonavir and metronidazole; Some countries are starting to procure tests of unknown quality; Long delays with logistics and transport due to commercial flight cancelation. Transportation issue could be addressed in some of the DG communications
- **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.

#### WHO REFERENCE MATERIAL OF INTEREST

- Considerations for **Disability** and COVID-19.

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/1o7t4hqehjmtjs3/COVID\\_19\\_disability\\_briefing.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/1o7t4hqehjmtjs3/COVID_19_disability_briefing.pdf?dl=0)- Mental

- **Mental Health** Considerations during COVID-19 Outbreak: [Access the publication](#)

- Instructional Materials on How to use the **WHO UN Partners Platform**:

Please find the link to an instructional video on how to use the platform, [HERE](#)

Please find the link to a presentation about the platform and how to use it, [HERE](#)

- New online course on the **Management of Ill Travelers at Points of Entry in the context of COVID-19** has been launched today in English and can be accessed here:

<https://extranet.who.int/hslp/training/course/view.php?id=325>.

#### - Infection Prevention and Control:

- WHO HQ has developed a [new FAQ page on COVID, pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding](#), which can be accessed [HERE](#)
- New - Operational considerations for case management of COVID-19 in health facility and community are available [HERE](#). This document is intended to guide the care of COVID-19 patients as the response capacity of health systems is challenged; to ensure that COVID-19 patients can access life-saving treatment, without compromising public health objectives and safety of health workers.
- Technical specification for Personal Protective Equipment  
Please visit this [LINK](#) for additional information on the WHO Disease Commodity Package.
  - a. Mask, surgical – health care worker
    - Surgical mask, good breathability, internal and external faces should be clearly identified Type II or higher.
    - EU MDD Directive 93/42/EEC Category III or equivalent,
    - EN 14683 Type II, IR, IIR
    - ASTM F2100 minimum Level 1 or equivalent.
  - b. Mask, surgical – patient
    - Surgical mask, good breathability, internal and external faces should be clearly identified Type I.
    - EN 14683 any type including Type I
    - ASTM F2100 any level or equivalent

## Hotline

The Call Center (0800 002 03) for questions related to COVID-19 is functional as of 21 March 2020 in the Primary Health Care Center Skopje.

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

<b>Call Center for the public questions related to COVID-19</b>	<b>0800 002 03</b>
<b>COVID-19 general information</b>	
“Alo Doctor” Call Center	02 15 123
<b>In case of symptoms and asymptomatic travelers</b>	
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
<b>Psychological support</b>	
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
<b>Red Cross mobile teams for elderly support</b>	
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
<b>Foreign Affairs</b>	
Regular line, Viber and WhatsApp	075 273 732
Regular line	075 446 647
Regular line, Viber and WhatsApp	070 282 078
<b>WHO</b>	Facebook/Twitter @WHOMKD
<b>Ministry of Health</b>	Facebook/Twitter @zdravstvomk