



## COVID-19 - Coronavirus disease 2019

### NORTH MACEDONIA

#### FLASH UPDATE 5

22 March 2020

Data as reported by authorities by 18:00, 22 March 2020

#### HIGHLIGHTS

##### Epidemiology update

Today North Macedonia has sadly announced the first COVID19 fatality, a 57-year-old woman. In the last 24 hours, 29 new cases were confirmed – the total number of COVID-19 in the country has reached 114. The patients are from Skopje, Debar, Gostivar, Shtip, Ohrid, Kavadarci and Kumanovo. Numbers are expected to increase further.

Out of the 24 hospitalized patients at the Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile Conditions. 7 patients required continuous oxygen mask treatment and 11 are in stable good health. One patient under mechanical respirator remains critical. The rest of the COVID19 positive persons are at home in good health and under monitoring.

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 - [www.vlada.mk/covid19](http://www.vlada.mk/covid19)

Whole of Government Response rolling out today:

- ✓ Government decided to start curfew as of today 22 March 2020, restricting the movement of all citizens between 21:00 and 06:00 every day.
- ✓ Government requested the EU Civil Protection mechanism for North Macedonia as they expect an increase in COVID19 cases and considerable needs in supplies. Minister Dimitrov stated that reallocation of EU IPA funds to fight coronavirus is required.
- ✓ North Macedonia is asking for nearly 600m EUR to get out of the crisis. EUR 400 million from commercial banks will be

#### SITUATION IN NUMBERS

total (new) cases in the last 24 hours

##### North Macedonia

114 confirmed (29)

1 death

1 recovered

##### Globally

266 073 confirmed (32 000)

11 184 deaths (1344)

##### Western Pacific Region

94 037 confirmed (688)

3426 deaths (21)

##### European Region

128 541 confirmed (23 950)

6000 deaths (1101)

##### South-East Asia

979 confirmed (61)

38 deaths (7)

##### Eastern Mediterranean Region

22 355 confirmed (1596)

1466 deaths (154)

##### Regions of the Americas

18 877 confirmed (5606)

235 deaths (57)

##### African Region

572 confirmed (99)

12 deaths (4)

#### WHO RISK ASSESSMENT

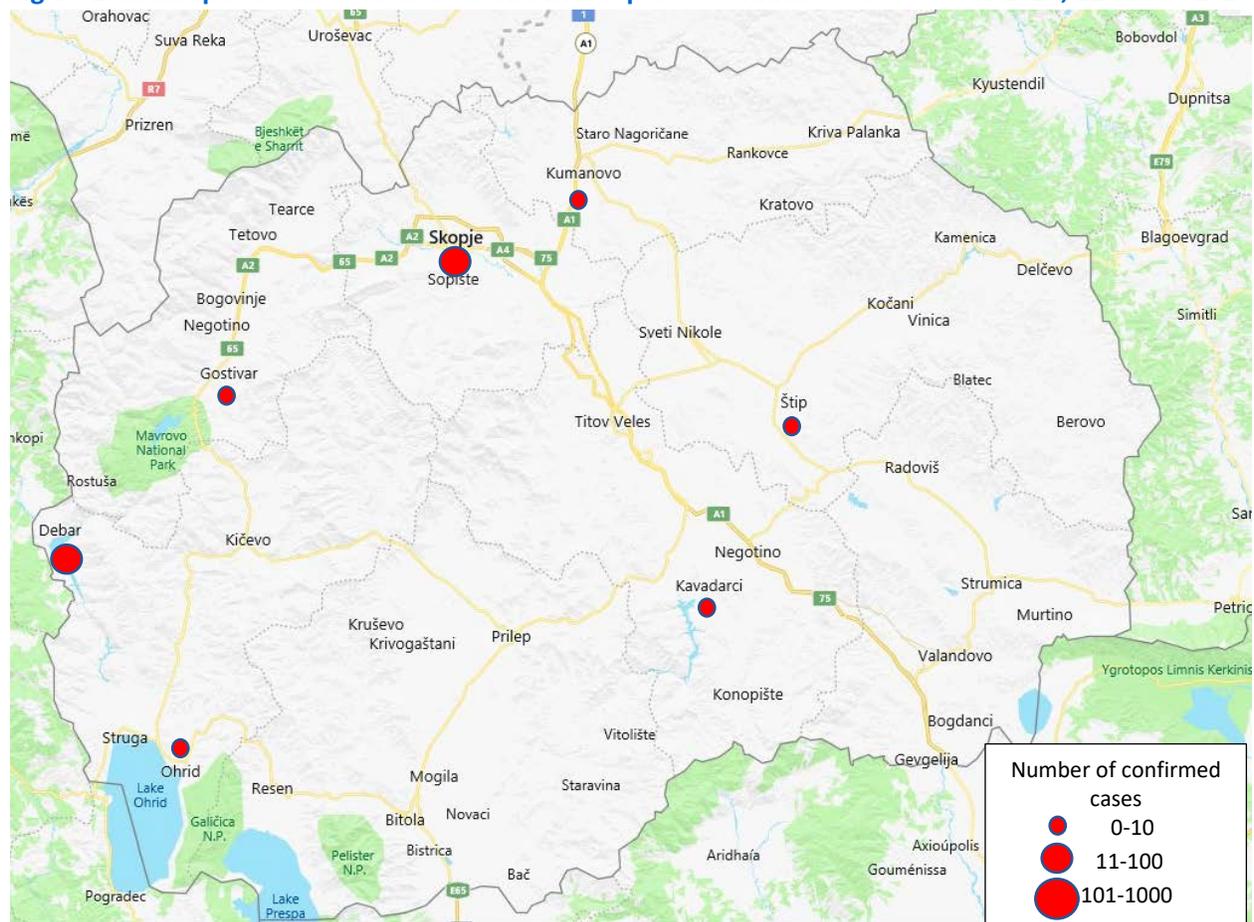
All levels Very high

required, around EUR 100 million from the World Bank and another EUR 87 million from the IMF.

- ✓ As of 22 March 2020, The army is mobilized for 3 tasks related to and will support all state authorities, primarily the police, in observance of the curfew, securing vital facilities, the border and prisons.
- ✓ Minister of defense informed that the Army-owned ROL-2 Hospital will now be fully operational for public health and will be located at the entrance or in the immediate vicinity of the Infectious Hospital, in support not only of armed forces also public health needs.
- ✓ As of tomorrow, 23 March 2020, 14 new COVID19 lab testing facilities will be functional in all the country. In Skopje, testing will be offered in the polyclinics Jane Sandanski and Chair.
- ✓ For citizens ages 65 and above there will be additional restriction of movement and more details to be announced on 23 March 2020.
- ✓ For the first time since the outbreak, the Minister of Health has called upon the citizens to help the health workforce by strictly abiding by the measures of the government.

## SURVEILLANCE

**Figure 1. Municipalities in North Macedonia with reported confirmed cases of COVID-19, 22 March 2020**



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

## Risk Assessment of COVID-19 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.

## NEW GOVERNMENT MEASURES ON 22 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 minister of health** today briefed on measures taken to increase capacity, regarding hotlines, patient access and lab testing. According to epidemiological surveys - a total of 14 COVID19 testing facilities across the country will be operational tomorrow. In Skopje, the outposts offering the tests are set in Chair and Jane Sandanski polyclinics and lab tests will be performed according to a screening algorithm. This is supported by the Association of General Practitioners, who will be involved in identification, early detection, increasing the access of citizens first to diagnostics.
- ✓ **Minister of defense** Sekerinska announced that the army will support the crisis by 3 main tasks:
  - The first task is to completely take control of entire formerly called green line border to be controlled and supervised by Army personnel to prevent illegal entry and exit from the border. This will enable the police to practically concentrate on the tasks, at home, inside the state.
  - The second task is the joint participation of mobile police and Army teams to check entrances and exits from settlements, especially in the area of crisis, but also mobile checkpoints in the areas of engagement. Joint police and army teams will be able to exercise control over the observance of the curfew, the respect for self-isolation and, if self-isolation is not respected, immediate measures to be taken, and to refer these persons to state quarantine and state isolation.
  - Thirdly the Army will provide physical security for the vital facilities provided by the MoI so far. It means that the Army will take over the security of facilities such as the State Assembly, the Government of the Republic of Northern Macedonia, but also important locations such as prisons.

- The Army would only function in combined teams with the police, because the police is trained to deal with this type of civilian threat, but army would reinforce in numbers the capacity of the police, and with equipment.
  - "The decisions to **deploy the Army** at such times were not easy. But they were justified because the whole world, not just us, is facing an epidemic, a danger that no one could have even imagined. An epidemic and danger that demands that we all be mobilized and focused and that is why the Army has rightly made available everything that it can to help the police, state authorities and the entire state, " said Minister Sekerinska on behalf of the government.
- ✓ **Minister of Finance** Angelovska proposed today to use a € 400 million bridge to bond facility with a maturity of up to 12 months to support the state's liquidity in times of pandemic and economic downturn, for the health sector as well as the economy. This loan as the name implies loan-to-Eurobond will be fully repaid with funds when the Eurobond is issued. It is a loan from foreign banks on favorable terms. It has a favorable interest rate, even lower than the previously issued 2018 Eurobond, which had a historically lowest interest rate of 2.75 percent.

#### 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.
- ✓ Deputy Prime Minister in charge of European Affairs Bujar Osmani in a letter to the European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenercic called for the activation of the European Civil Protection Mechanism for the Republic of North Macedonia: in view of expected growing number of patients in the country, in the coming period, the country will need additional medical supplies, materials and equipment for appropriate outreach activities. According to the Secretariat for European Affairs, the Republic of North Macedonia is a member of the European Civil Protection Mechanism, from which, in 2016, it used assistance during the floods in the Skopje region. Minister Dimitrov stated that reallocation of EU IPA funds to fight coronavirus is required

#### GAPS/NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

**The most important priority at this point and in the next 3 mnths is to ensure that the health system can cope with increasing numbers of cases needing intensive management and also protecting the health care workers.**

- **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
- **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 sustainability of the health facilities and health care
- Community support and outreach activities for the vulnerable
- Ensuring treatment for all citizens including the vulnerable groups with other diseases and pathologies.
- Isolation and mental health of the elderly and disabled.
- Compliance of the citizens to instructions of the government and self isolation.

### HOW TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND LATEST OFFICIAL MEASURES?

All Government information and measures are now organized in english at the government website: <https://vlada.mk/node/20488?ln=en-gb> and [www.vlada.mk/covid19](http://www.vlada.mk/covid19)

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the vlada.mk website. The page features a prominent red banner with the text "MEASURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROTECTION AND PREVENTION FROM CORONAVIRUS COVID 19" in white, bold, uppercase letters. Below the banner, there is a white box containing the title "Measures and Recommendations for Protection and prevention from Coronavirus COVID 19" and a sub-section titled "What is COVID-19?". The sub-section text reads: "SARS-CoV-2 is a new virus from the family Coronavirus initially discovered in China in December 2019. The virus causes acute viral respiratory disease. The virus spreads from person to person, touch and respiratory droplets (coughing, sneezing, etc.). The initial experiences show that elderly and chronically ill are exposed to higher risk of complications and severe forms of disease. The incubation period is 14 days during which the infected do not show any symptoms, but can transmit the virus to other people." The website header includes the logo of the Republic of North Macedonia and navigation links for "Strategic priorities", "Government & ministries", "Media center", and "Open Government". The browser's address bar shows the URL "vlada.mk/node/20488?ln=en-gb".

## What if you suspect that you have COVID-19?

According to the recommendations and protocols of the Infectious Diseases Committee, all passengers arriving from regions of risk, as well as the ones who are in self-isolation should, immediately after feeling any symptoms characteristic for COVID-19, call the contact phones within the epidemiology services that are available on the territory of the whole country. The measures have been introduced since the very beginning and it is highly recommended for all citizens not to visit their general practitioner in order to avoid situations of direct contact and risk with possibly infected patients.

### CONTACT NUMBERS FOR SYMPTOMS CHARACTERISTIC FOR CORONAVIRUS:

Institute of Public Health Skopje - 078/387-194

IH Skopje – Alo Doktore -02/15-123

Public Health Centre Skopje - 071/289-614

Public Health Centre Bitola - 071/261-330

Public Health Centre Tetovo - 075/240-464

Public Health Centre Shtip - 078/365-613

Public Health Centre Veles - 071/219-278

Public Health Centre Kochani - 071/373-913

Public Health Centre Kumanovo - 070/215-851

Public Health Centre Ohrid - 070/723-029

Public Health Centre Prilep - 076/475-747

Public Health Centre Strumica - 072/235-543

RU Gostivar - 076/365-161

RU Gevgelija - 078/545-44

## Measures adopted by the Government for prevention of spreading of COVID-19

At its 15th regular session (10.03.2020) the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia discussed the information submitted by the Steering Committee for Coordination and Management at the Crisis Management System for undertaking additional measures and activities for prevention of the spread of the coronavirus upon the suggestion of the Ministry of Health's Infectious Diseases Committee, and adopted the following conclusions:

1. To increase measures and activities for prevention of the spread of the coronavirus.
2. To suspend the educational process and teaching in all kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and high-education facilities, and in the public science institutes on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia in the following 14 days. All extracurricular programmes such as foreign language courses etc. are also temporarily suspended.
3. For the implementation of this measure, one of the parents of children aged under 10, who are exempt from the obligation to attend kindergartens or schools, is exempt from his/her work obligations.
4. To prohibit mass gatherings and indoor and outdoor events, as well as all cultural events and manifestations for more than 1000 people across the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia in the next 14 days. The Government recommends not holding public events expected to be attended by up to 1000 participants.
5. To prohibit attendance of spectators at all sporting events across the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia in the next 30 days.
6. Mandatory self-isolation is introduced for people returning from high and medium risk countries in a period of 14 days (in accordance with the list by the World Health Organization).
7. To prohibit export of medical equipment and medical supplies by economic operators and manufacturers from the Republic of North Macedonia, except with a special permit issued by the Ministry of Health.
8. Elderly people and high-risk categories of citizens with chronic diseases should reduce their movements and avoid public transport.
9. Travelling to high- and medium-risk countries in accordance with the list by the World Health Organization should be avoided.
10. The State Election Committee to release employees of public health institutions from further participation in the election process and to replace them with others.
11. Private and legal entities which fail to respect and violate the recommendations shall be sanctioned under Articles 205 and 206 of the Criminal Code.
12. To introduce a health locator card for all flights and all airlines, i.e. a form filled out by passengers, containing contact information to facilitate contacting them in case of need.
13. To prohibit organised international bus transport (bus, van, minibus etc.) to high-risk countries, as well as from such countries to the Republic of North Macedonia.

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

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.

<b>Call Center for questions related to COVID-19</b>	0800 002 03
<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