



COVID-19 - Coronavirus disease 2019

NORTH MACEDONIA

FLASH UPDATE 8

26 March 2020

Data as reported by authorities by 19:00, 26 March 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

Epidemiology update

24 new cases have been confirmed in the last 24 hours in the Republic of North Macedonia and for the first time one case was identified in Tetovo. Two patients have recovered and are discharged from the Clinic for Infectious Diseases (CID). Currently, 39 patients are hospitalized at CID.

The total number of registered COVID-19 cases in the country is 201 of which 20 health professionals.

Age of patients vary from 2-91 years old. However, highest risk groups remain those between 30-59 years

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

- ✓ National officials communicated that the main priority of the current COVID 19 response at this phase is to maintain the capacity of the health system to cope with increasing numbers of cases needing intensive medical care, as well as to protect all health care workers
- ✓ Today the Infectious disease commission recommended the use of PPE by all healthcare professionals and standardizing the PPE specifications in line with WHO recommendations in all health care facilities countrywide.
- ✓ Donor Assistance for Coronavirus is Coordinated at the DPM of European affairs. The government is working closely with international partners to accelerating procurement of COVID19 related personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilators and testing kits.

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

total (new) cases in the last 24 hours

North Macedonia

201 confirmed (24)

3 deaths

3 recovered

Globally

416 686 confirmed (40 712)

18 589 deaths (2202)

Western Pacific Region

97 766 confirmed (1186)

3518 deaths (16)

European Region

250 592 confirmed (29 574)

13 950 deaths (1797)

South-East Asia

2344 confirmed (354)

72 deaths (7)

Eastern Mediterranean Region

29 631 confirmed (2416)

2008 deaths (131)

Regions of the Americas

60 834 confirmed (11 390)

813 deaths (248)

African Region

1664 confirmed (359)

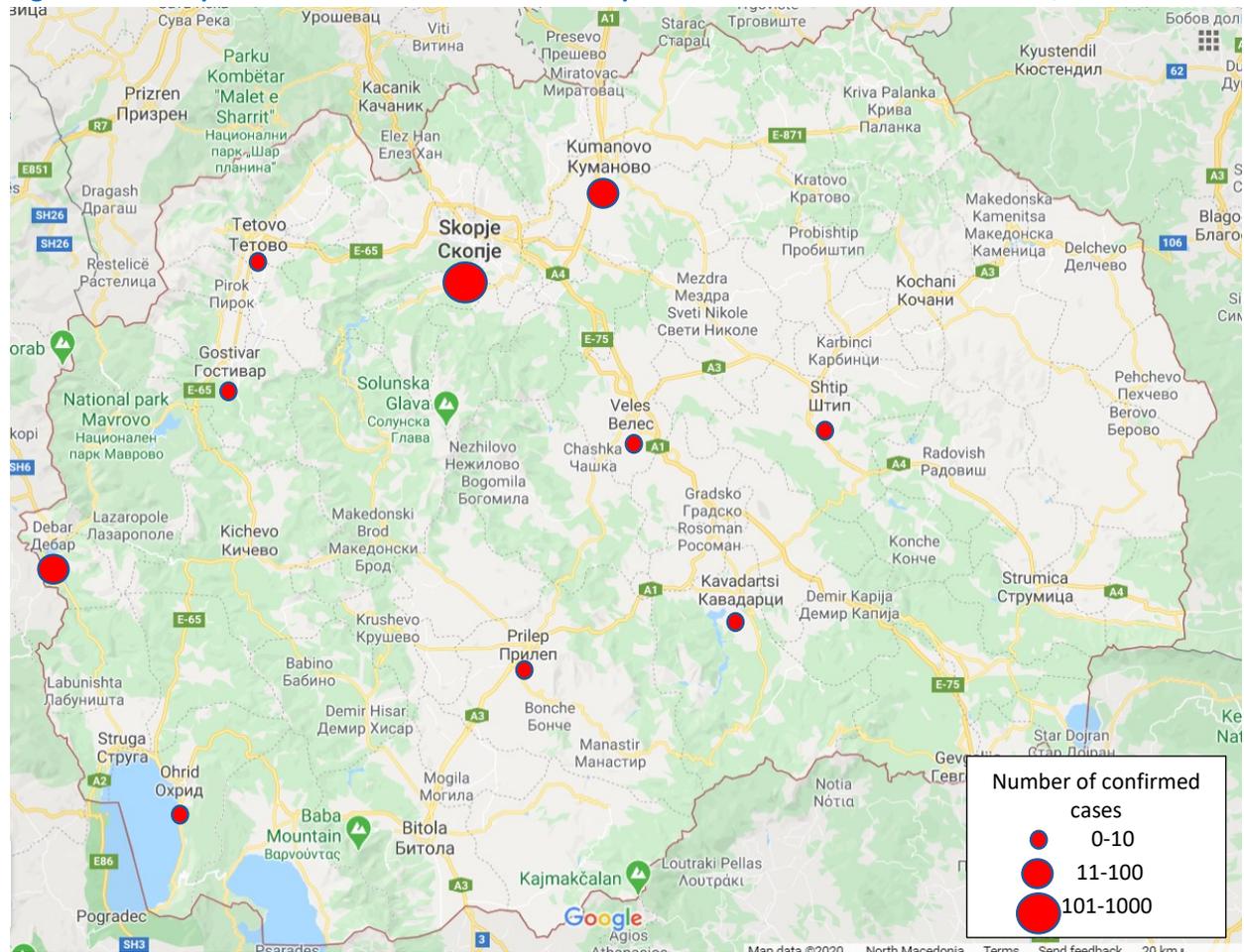
29 deaths (3)

WHO RISK ASSESSMENT

Global levels Very high

SURVEILLANCE

Figure 1. Municipalities in North Macedonia with reported confirmed cases of COVID-19, 26 March 2020



<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/685d0ace521648f8a5beeeee1b9125cd>

The disaggregated data of the confirmed COVID-19 cases through 25 March 2020 which includes the data reported on 26 March 2020 could be accessed at the Institute of Public Health (<http://www.iph.mk/covid-25-3-2020/>)

There are currently 10.414 people ordered into self-isolation across Macedonia. These are mostly citizens who were abroad as the coronavirus was spreading through Europe and elsewhere, and returned home. So far, 149 were charged or reported for violating the order. Overnight, the evening curfew was violated by about 300 people, nearly half of whom were detained, and the others let go with a warning.

Risk Assessment of COVID-19 in North Macedonia according to geographical spread

The WHO risk assessment at the global and European level of COVID-19 further states that the risk is very high. In North Macedonia, the highest cumulative incidence per 100,000 population is registered in Debar with 154.9 followed by Skopje 19.9, and Shtip is 15.2 per 100.000 people.

According to the WHO risk categorization, Debar and Skopje are in Phase 4 (widespread community transmission) and the rest of the Republic of Northern Macedonia is in phase 2 (sporadic cases).

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-2019), EUROPE

- Based on the WHO and ECDC data as of 26 March 2020 10:00 CET, the **WHO European Region accounts for more than 60% of the global burden** of 416 686 cases reported globally with 250 592 cases in total to date.

- In Europe, **Italy is leading top-6** with 74 386 cases, or almost 30% of the total case count in the Region, followed by Spain (47 610 cases), Germany (36 508 cases), France (25 233 cases), Switzerland (9 714 cases), and the United Kingdom (9529 cases). Thirteen more countries in the Region reported 1000 cases or more to date, listed in descendant order (The Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Portugal, Norway, Sweden, Turkey, Israel, Denmark, Czechia, Ireland, Luxembourg and Poland).

- **Around 75% of the global burden of COVID-19 deaths** (18 589) were from the European Region (13 950 deaths), with Italy and Spain reporting almost 78.5% of all deaths in Europe (7505 and 3434 deaths respectively), followed by France (1331 deaths), the United Kingdom (463 deaths), and the Netherlands (356 deaths).

WHO ROLE AND ACTION in North Macedonia

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 procured locally new list of urgently needed PPE and lab supplies for the IPH Virology Lab.
- ✓ WHO will be delivering by end of March additional COVID19 testing kits in support of the strategic national upscale of testing as per WHO guidance.
- ✓ North Macedonia has joined the WHO SOLIDARITY Trial which is a large, international study designed to generate robust data needed to show which treatments are the most effective. The trial provides simplified procedures to enable even hospitals that have been overloaded to participate. Several countries from all corners of the globe have already confirmed participation. (Argentina, Bahrain, Canada, France, Iran, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland and Thailand). The trial uses an adaptive design, with five initial arms: 1) the usual care that is provided to the patients in the country; 2) Remdesivir 3) Lopinavir/Ritonavir; 4) Lopinavir/Ritonavir with interferon beta and 5) includes chloroquine.
- ✓ The online WHO training course for COVID-19 for health care and infection control and protection (IPC) is now available in Macedonian Language on the WHO learning platform for Health workers. <https://openwho.org/> . UNFPA and WHO are working now on producing the Albanian Language version.
- ✓ WHO has helped MOH preparing list of critical needs of protective supplies and testing kits for the next three months for the health sector and coordinating with partners the support of the identified needs – and coordinated through the office of the deputy prime minister for European affairs, Minister Bujar Osmani.
- ✓ The country strategic preparedness and response plan and Contingency Plan for COVID – 19 is adjusted to accommodate 2000 patients taking into consideration the capacity of treatment in the country. The plan provides strategic interventions in line with 8 pillars.
- ✓ 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

The country is in declared national emergency Announced by the President of the Republic on 18 March 2020 for one month.

- ✓ The country is still under imposed curfew in an effort to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus disease. The movement of all citizens is restricted across the country from 9 pm to 5 am. In addition, people under 18 are not allowed to leave their homes from 9pm until noontime the following day, while people over 67 years of age are restricted from leaving their homes between 11 pm and 5 am the next day. North Macedonia's government decided on Wednesday to implement a 13-hour curfew on weekends, from 4 pm to 5 am.
- ✓ 500 000 protective masks and 20 000 tests and reagents for COVID-19 testing should arrive in the country as donation during next week.
- ✓ The training of trainers' program for health professionals supported by the University of Brown is in progress. The training began yesterday and will last for 4 days. 20 doctors and 20 nurses are enrolled to be trained for trainers for COVID-19 response including admission, triage, assessment etc.

COVID-19 UN AND PARTNER COORDINATION

- ✓ To provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach in identifying and repurposing the available bilateral assistance to the COVID-19 response, all public administration bodies receiving bilateral donor assistance will report promptly to the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) the amount of funds available for each project. The SEA will then submit a formal request to the bilateral donors for the reuse of funds in accordance with the identified priority needs for COVID19.
- ✓ UN agencies, the EU Delegation and representatives of the National Coordination Body have established a special coordination body focused on institutions' needs as well as donors' possibilities to provide for these needs. So far, 25 ventilators are provided through funds from the Embassy of

Norway, through the UNOPS, to be shipped soon. 30 more ventilators are procured by UNDP from China through EU funds – using the initial EUR 4 million of EU.

- ✓ The parliament speakers of North Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia called for assistance to be provided to the Western Balkan countries to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in a letter addressed to European Parliament President David Sassoli, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. They requested to consider the possibility of including the Western Balkan region in the EU + export license scheme, to enable the Western Balkans region accede the Joint Procurement Agreement for medical countermeasures and thus to participate in the joint public procurement of medical and protective equipment to combat the coronavirus pandemic, to consider repurposing unspent funds from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) to fight COVID19.
- ✓ EU Commissioner Várhelyi has informed about EU support to North Macedonia in the fight against coronavirus between EUR 65 million and EUR 70 million (EUR 4 million for procurement of ventilators from China, EUR 50 million initially planned to be allocated for infrastructure and environment, to be redirected to help social and economic recovery in the aftermath of the crisis, EUR 9 million as support to small and medium-sized companies and EUR 3 million for direct budget support.)
- ✓ 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 COVID19 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 months 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 whether those working in the COVID-19 designated facilities or elsewhere countrywide because of the community transmission.
 - 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 during and after the crisis.
 - Community support and outreach activities for the vulnerable

- Ensuring continuity of treatment and access to regular health care for all citizens including the vulnerable groups with other diseases and pathologies.
- Isolation and mental health support to the elderly and disabled.
- Compliance of the citizens to instructions of the government and self-isolation.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS NORTH MACEDONIA

<p><i>Useful Links</i></p> <p>WHO Facebook/Twitter</p> <p>MoH Facebook/Twitter</p> <p>WHO Europe website for COVID-19</p> <p>All Government information and measures / ENG</p> <p>MoH COVID-19 information</p> <p>Detention centers: guidance on Preparedness, prevention and control of COVID-19 in prisons and places of detention.</p> <p>Guidance document on immunization services during COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p>How to stay physically active during COVID-19 self-quarantine</p> <p>Q&A on COVID-19, pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding</p> <p>New WHO Global Campaign – “Pass the message: Five steps to kicking out coronavirus” with FIFA</p>	<p><i>For questions related to COVID-19</i></p> <p>Call Center 0800 002 03</p> <p>“Alo Doctor” 02 15 123</p> <p><i>In case of symptoms and asymptomatic travelers</i></p> <p>CPH Bitola 071 261 330 CPH Veles 071 219 278 CPH Gevgelija 071 219 278 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</p> <p><i>Psychological support</i></p> <p>-Self-isolated adults 072 919 009</p> <p>-Citizens of municipalities Debar and Center Zhupa 070 241 807</p> <p>-adolescents and their parents 078 378 728</p> <p>-parents of children with disabilities 070291574</p> <p>-Parents of preschool and school children 072 912 676</p>	<p><i>Red Cross mobile teams for elderly support</i></p> <p>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 Team for support of homeless people</p> <p><i>Foreign Affairs</i></p> <p>Regular line 075 446 647 Regular line, Viber and WhatsApp: 070 282 078</p> <div> </div> <p>Text hi to +41 79 412 32 36 on WhatsApp</p>
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