



#### HIGHLIGHTS

##### Epidemiology update

18 new cases have been confirmed in the last 24 hours in the Republic of North Macedonia. Currently, 41 patients are hospitalized at CID.

**The total number of registered COVID-19 cases in the country is 219. Among 21 health professionals with the virus, 14 were infected at hospitals / outpatient clinics.**

Age of patients vary from 2-91 years. However, the highest risk groups remain those between 30-59 years. Men are infected at same rate as women.

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

- ✓ The Government decided to abolish all custom duty for the import of medical consumables and on the drug chloroquine.
- ✓ Early next week, a so-called mobile hospital is expected to be set up at the Clinic for Infectious Diseases.
- ✓ The working hours of the immunization units at the polyclinic under the Primary Care Center Skopje are adjusted and they are open in the period from 12:00 to 18:00.
- ✓ A National platform for e-learning is operational.

#### SITUATION IN NUMBERS

total (new) cases in the last 24 hours

##### North Macedonia

219 confirmed (18)

3 deaths

3 recovered

##### Globally

509 164 confirmed (46 484)

23 335 deaths (2501)

##### Western Pacific Region

100 018 confirmed (960)

3567 deaths (27)

##### European Region

286 697 confirmed (36 414)

16 105 deaths (2155)

##### South-East Asia Region

2932 confirmed (396)

105 deaths (26)

##### Eastern Mediterranean Region

35 249 confirmed (2807)

2336 deaths (174)

##### Regions of the Americas

81 137 confirmed (5425)

1176 deaths (111)

##### African Region

2419 confirmed (482)

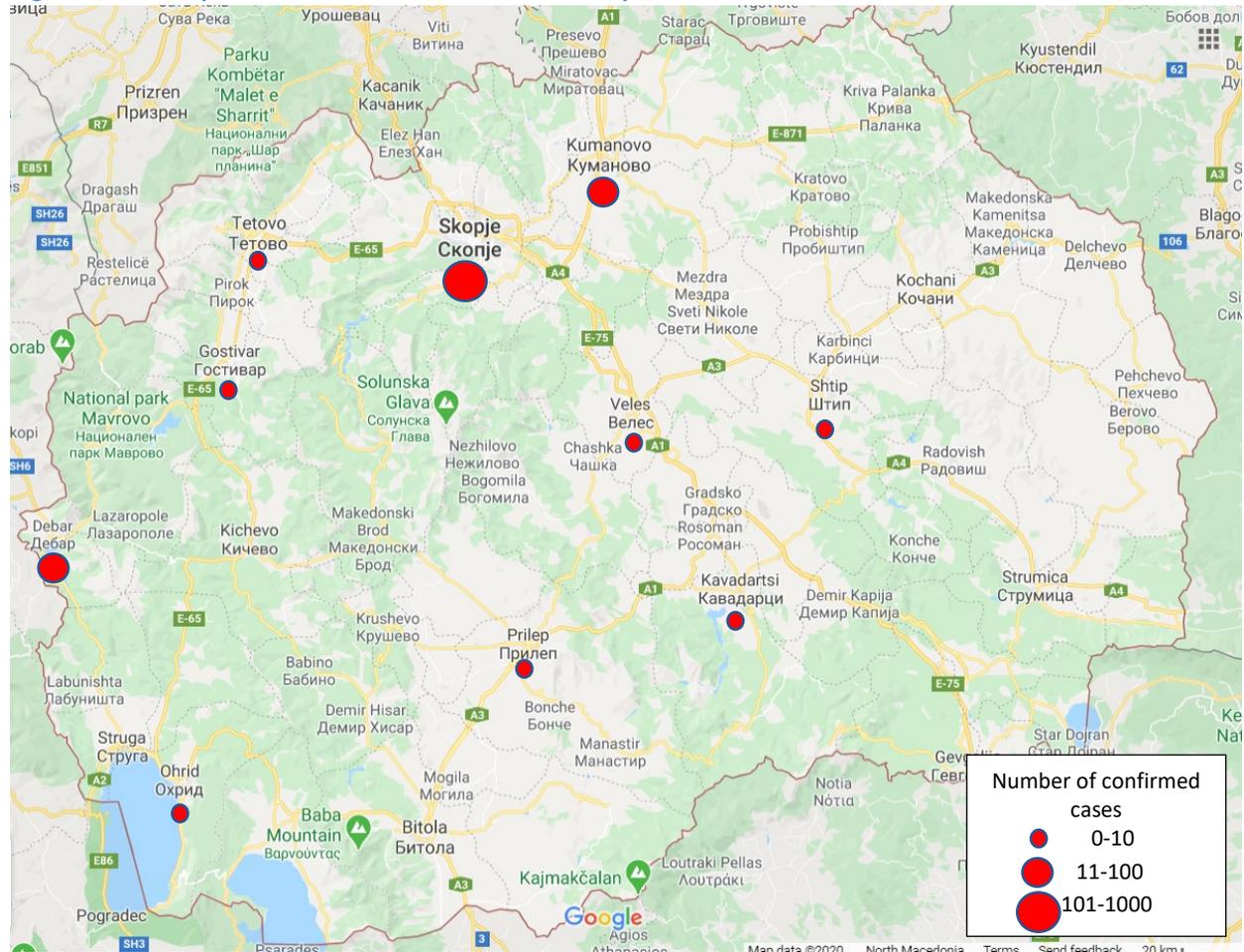
39 deaths (8)

#### WHO RISK ASSESSMENT

Global levels Very high

## SURVEILLANCE

Figure 1. Municipalities in North Macedonia with reported confirmed cases of COVID-19, 27 March 2020



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

The disaggregated data of the confirmed COVID-19 cases through 26 March 2020 which includes the data reported on 27 March 2020 could be accessed at the [Institute of Public Health](#).

Overnight 37 people were detained for disobeying curfew among the total of 66 citizens noted by the police. The total number of fined persons so far is 301, of whom 138 have been detained at the police station.

### 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 21.7, and Shtip is 15.2 per 100,000 people. In the territory of Skopje, COVID-19 cases are registered in 10 municipalities of which Karposh has the highest number of registered cases (27).

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 27 March 2020 10:00 CET, the **WHO European Region accounts for 56% of the global burden** of 509 164 cases reported globally with 287 062 cases in total to date.

- In Europe, **Italy is leading top-6** with 80 539 cases, or almost 30% of the total case count in the Region, followed by Spain (56 188 cases), Germany (42 288 cases), France (29 155 cases), the United Kingdom (11 658) and Switzerland (10 714 cases). Fifteen more countries in the Region reported 1000 cases or more to date, listed in descendant order (The Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Turkey, Portugal, Norway, Israel, Sweden, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Russia Federation and Romania).

- **Around 69% of the global burden of COVID-19 deaths** (23 335) were from the European Region (16 106 deaths), with Italy and Spain reporting almost 76% of all deaths in Europe (8165 and 4089 deaths respectively), followed by France (1695 deaths), the United Kingdom (578 deaths), and the Netherlands (434 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 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.

WHO procured locally new list of urgently needed PPE and lab supplies for the IPH Virology Lab and will be delivering by end of March additional COVID19 testing kits in support of the strategic national scale up 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 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.

## 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.**

- ✓ Early next week, facilities will be established next to the Clinic for Infectious Diseases that will accommodate approximately 130 beds, effectively doubling the capacity of the Infectious Disease Clinic - with adequate toilets, dry corridors to communicate with the clinic itself, in line with MOH strategy to concentrate the capacity and expertise at the Clinic of Infectious Diseases.
- ✓ 55 respiratory machines will be provided – 25 are obtained through UNOPS and financially supported by Norway and 30 are reserved through UNDP from a supplier from China financially supported by the emergency funds provided by the EU.
- ✓ Health authorities informed that a donation of 3000 masks was received yesterday and another 3000 canvas and surgical masks today to be distributed to family doctors, who are fully involved in the system of patient detection, examination and scheduling.

## 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.

### **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.

### **SUBJECT IN FOCUS**

**Is it possible for COVID-19 to transmit by air? Will WHO change their guidance based on recent studies that look at the role of aerosol-generating procedures?**

Based on the information received so far and on our experience with other coronaviruses, COVID-19 appears to spread mostly through respiratory droplets (for instance produced when a sick person coughs) and close contact. Droplets are too large to be airborne for long periods of time, and quickly settle out of air. This is why WHO recommends that everyone maintain hand and respiratory hygiene.

The NEJM recently published correspondence on an experimental study about virus persistence in air and on surfaces. This study showed how artificial aerosolization of the virus can allow it to be suspended in the air for some time. This happens in some settings, such as when health workers perform certain procedures.

In line with current evidence, WHO maintains the recommendations of droplet and contact precautions for healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients. For those performing aerosol generating procedures, WHO recommends airborne and contact precautions. The use of medical masks such as N95, eye protection, gloves and gown are required for direct patient care; respirator masks are specifically required for aerosol generating procedures. This is consistent with [WHO recommendations on IPC](#) during health care where novel coronavirus is suspected.

## IMPORTANT CONTACTS NORTH MACEDONIA

<p><i>Useful Links</i></p> <p>WHO <a href="#">Facebook/Twitter</a></p> <p>MoH <a href="#">Facebook/Twitter</a></p> <p><a href="#">WHO Europe website for COVID-19</a></p> <p><a href="#">All Government information and measures / ENG</a></p> <p><a href="#">MoH COVID-19 information</a></p> <p><a href="#">Detention centers: guidance on Preparedness, prevention and control of COVID-19 in prisons and places of detention.</a></p> <p><a href="#">Guidance document on immunization services during COVID-19 pandemic</a></p> <p><a href="#">How to stay physically active during COVID-19 self-quarantine</a></p> <p><a href="#">Q&amp;A on COVID-19, pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding</a></p> <p>New WHO Global Campaign – <a href="#">“Pass the message: Five steps to kicking out coronavirus”</a> 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Self-isolated adults 072 919 009</li> <li>-Citizens of municipalities Debar and Center Zhupa 070 241 807</li> <li>-adolescents and their parents 078 378 728</li> <li>-parents of children with disabilities 070291574</li> <li>-Parents of preschool and school children 072 912 676</li> </ul>	<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 data-bbox="1003 772 1523 1297" style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>Have questions about <b>COVID-19?</b>              We have answers</p>  <p>Click this link and <b>text hi to</b>              the whatsapp number</p>  <p>World Health Organization</p> </div> <p>Text hi to +41 79 412 32 36 on WhatsApp</p>
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