

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

North Macedonia Flash Update – 40

Data as reported by national authorities by 23:00 CET, 10 May 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

In the last 48 hours

- **Tests performed:** 411 and 275 SARS-CoV-2 tests and 8.6% and 7.3 tested positive on Saturday and Sunday, respectively
- **New cases:** 36 and 20 new cases were reported each day respectively
- **Recovered:** 37 COVID-19 patients
- **Fatalities:** 1 new COVID-19 death

Cumulative registered COVID-19 as of 10 May

- The total number of registered COVID-19 cases is **1645 of which 241 (14.7%) are among health workers.**
- 19 096 SARS-CoV-2 tests were performed.
- **1136 COVID-19 patients recovered** so far in the country.
- **Geographic spread and deaths:** COVID-19 cases are registered in 30 cities – first case is registered in Berovo. Majority of all cases 69% are from three cities Skopje, Kumanovo and Prilep (550, 408 and 176). **69% of all deaths are registered in Kumanovo, Skopje, Struga and Prilep.**
- **Gender distribution:** More women are infected with coronavirus than men (857 and 785 respectively). However, almost 67% of all deaths are men.
- **Comorbidity:** 74% of death cases
- **Age distribution:**
 - >60-year: 22% of all confirmed COVID-19 cases
 - >60-year: 65% of all deaths.
 - 0-9-year: 54 confirmed COVID-19 cases
 - 10-19-year: 65 confirmed COVID-19 cases

Considerations for public health and social measures in the workplace in the context of COVID-19

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/considerations-for-public-health-and-social-measures-in-the-workplace-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/considerations-for-school-related-public-health-measures-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

WHO has released a video summarizing [key moments in the COVID-19 response](#) so far.

SURVEILLANCE

Figure 1. North Macedonia – Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases (n=1622) and deaths (n=91) by 10 May 2020 20:00

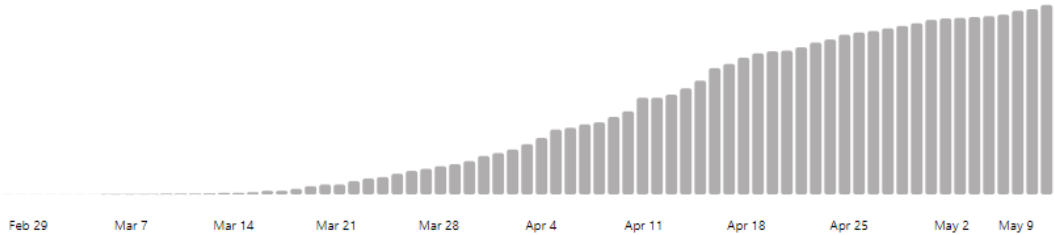
Confirmed Cases Over Time

Cumulative

1,622

confirmed cases

Source: World Health Organization



Deaths Over Time

Cumulative

91

deaths

Source: World Health Organization

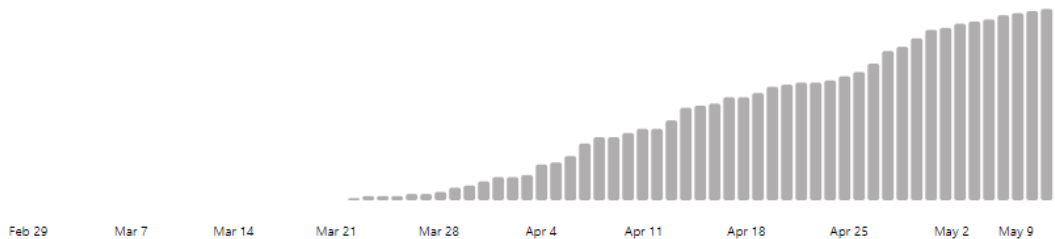
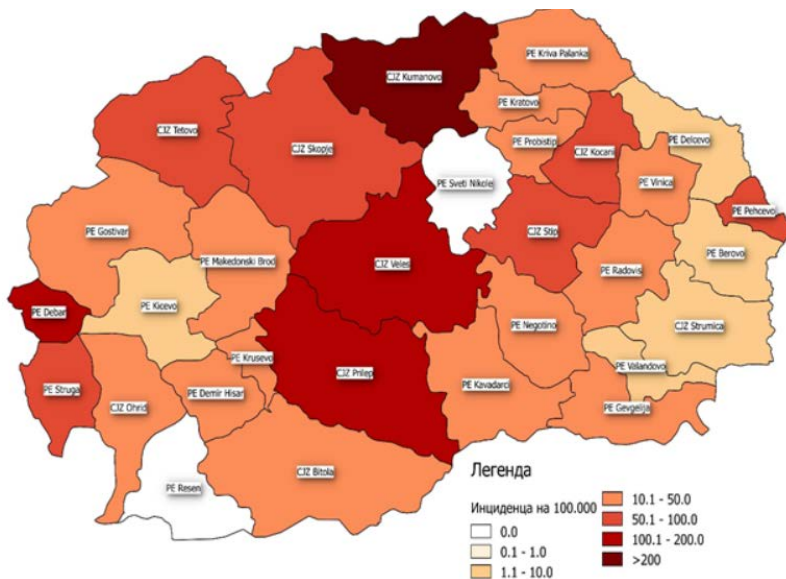


Figure 2. North Macedonia – COVID-19 incidence per 100,000 people, as of 10 May 2020

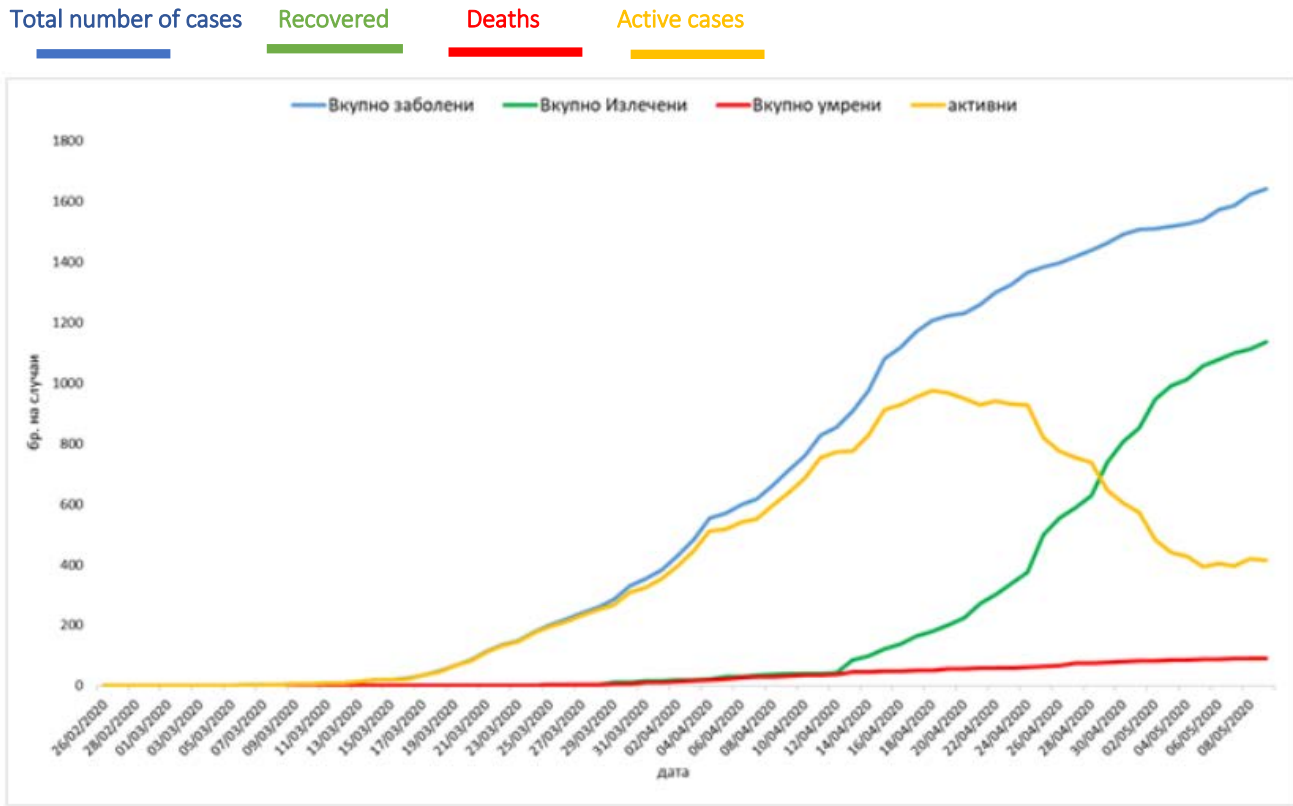


The highest cumulative incidence is in Kumanovo (285.9/100,000 people), followed by Prilep (184.6/100,000 people), Debar (183.8/100,000 people), and Veles (161.5/100,000 people). Six other cities have incidence above 50.0 cases per 100,000 people (Struga, Skopje, Shtip, Kochani, Tetovo and Pehchevo).

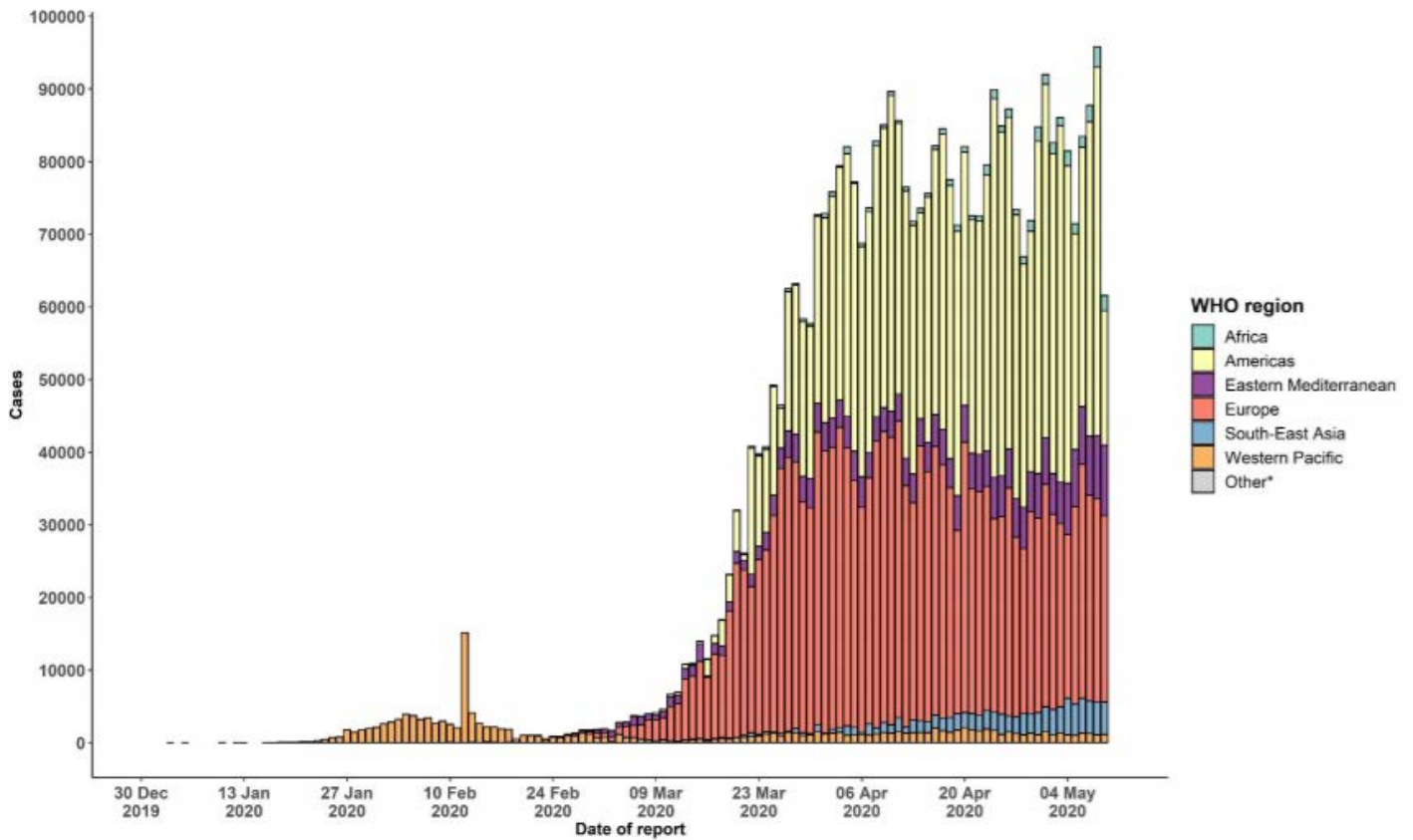
Age of patients vary from 0-94 years (average age – 45 years old). However, the highest risk group is between 50-59 years old.

The disaggregated data of the confirmed COVID-19 cases through 9 May 2020 which includes the cases reported on 10 May 2020 by MoH could be accessed at the www.iph.mk

Figure. 3 North Macedonia – COVID-19 statistics as of 10 May (n=1642)



Epidemic curve of confirmed COVID-19, by date of report and WHO region through 10 May 2020



Due to a change in reporting system to align with figures published by the US CDC, counts for the United States of America were adjusted to 1 245 775 cases (-99 new cases) and 75 364 deaths (5475 new deaths).

SITUATION IN NUMBERS (BY WHO REGION) and TOTAL (NEW CASES IN LAST 24 HOURS)

GLOBALLY	3 917 366 cases (61578)	274 361 deaths (8499)
Africa	42 626 cases (2082)	1369 deaths (47)
Americas	1 655 378 cases (18537)	98 723 deaths (6830)
Eastern Mediterranean	255 728 cases (9706)	8878 deaths (130)
Europe	1 707 946 cases (25 608)	155 552 deaths (1319)
South-East Asia	95 314 cases (4506)	3356 deaths (152)
Western Pacific	159 662 cases (1139)	6470 deaths (21)

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-2019), WHO EUROPE REGION as of 10 May 2020 10:00 CET

- The cases in the European Region now are **representing 42% of the global burden** reported to date.
- Globally, **USA carries the heaviest case load with 1 245 775 million cases**, followed by Spain and Italy. In addition, five more countries from the European Region are in the top-10 worldwide (United Kingdom, Russian Federation, Germany, Turkey and France). These are reporting over 100 000 cases.
- Besides, **fourteen more countries reported 10 000 cases or more**, listed in descending order (Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal, Sweden, Belarus, Ireland, Israel, Austria, Poland, Ukraine, Romania, Denmark and Serbia);
- Cumulatively, **57% of the global burden of COVID-19 deaths** (274 361 deaths) **have been reported in the European Region** (155 552 deaths), with United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and France each reporting more than 20 000 deaths and jointly accounting for 74% of all deaths in Europe.
- Another **nine countries in the Region reported 1000 deaths or more** – Belgium (8581), Germany (7395) Netherlands (5422), Turkey (3739), Sweden (3220) Russian Federation (1915), Switzerland (1531), Ireland (1446), and Portugal (1126);

[New] WHAT IS NEW?

- A newly released WHO scientific brief summarizes the current evidence on the impact of angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors and receptor blockers on severe acute respiratory illness due to COVID-19. The Scientific brief can be accessed [Here](#).
- Pan American Health Organization and the United Nations Office for Project Services have published new [guidelines on COVID-19 prevention measures on construction projects, for workers](#) to take measures to protect themselves from infection. The guidelines are only available in Spanish at this time.

WHAT WHO IS DOING FOR COVID19 IN NORTH MACEDONIA?

In line with the strategic Government's approach in fighting COVID19 whereby efforts are put on increasing testing, maintaining quality COVID19 care and essential care and protecting health care workers, WHO works closely with the government and national and global health partners to enable the response.

Risk Communication

- WHO held on 8 May a **Meeting online with all EUROPE Ministers** attended by North Macedonia– about COVID-19 response, **transition experience** and lessons learned. The Ministerial Roundtable included health ministers from countries that have eased restrictions to share their experiences and discuss lessons learned and the challenges that lie ahead.
- MOH and WHO launched on 5 May a media campaign for **Hand Hygiene and Nursing see below**.
- **Western Balkan ministerial WHO briefing on exit strategies** was held on 5 May 2020.
- Translation of **WHO guideline on Safe Ramadan** practices in the context of the COVID-19: in Macedonian, Albanian, Pashto, Dari, Turkish and Roma languages.
- **European immunization week**: WHO supported the country to raise awareness about maintaining essential health services and importance of immunization in preventing diseases and protecting life at the time of COVID19. Activities are held during the European Immunization Week 2020, from 20-26 April 2020. Click here : [European Immunization Week](#) . WHO MKD supported translation and adaptation of the following materials for social media:
 - EIW Poster adaptation
 - Video Adaptation - How do vaccine work?
 - Video Adaptation - Why should I get vaccinated

Risk perception and behavioral change

WHO initiated in partnership with National Institute of Public Health **COVID-19 behavioral survey** to gain an understanding of issues such as: trust in health authorities, recommendations and information; risk perceptions; acceptance of recommended behaviours; knowledge; barriers/drivers to recommended behaviours; misperceptions; and stigma. The results will be available to the policy makers to assess and modify risk communication strategies on aspects related to COVID19. The results will also inform post-pandemic actions, e.g. addressing possible

WHO action in COVID-19 outbreak in North Macedonia aims at limiting the virus spread, protecting health and the health workers at the frontline, preserving the health care system capacity and its sustainability to respond and provide essential services to the population.

WHO is the lead UN agency for Health and main technical and health policy advisor to the government on COVID-19 containment and mitigation.

WHO works in coordination closely with other UN agencies as per the UN reform.

Western Balkan including North Macedonia is one of the priority countries for the WHO European Region.

Technical support, guidance and assistance are provided through the WHO Country Office from all levels of the Organization.

There is abundance of technical

family, mental health, or other adverse events as a result of the crisis. The final results are expected around mid-May 2020.

Identification, virus testing and contact tracing

- **WHO organized on 8 May 2020 Virtual laboratory training for scaling up national laboratory capacities addressed to Macedonian professionals.** The national laboratories in North Macedonia engaged in COVID-19 testing to take part in it. The objective of the conference is to:
 - Update on tests available for COVID-19 testing
 - Verification and validation processes
 - Recommendations to ensure procurement during scaling up national laboratory capacities for COVID-19
 - Recommendations and discussion on training possibilities for scaling up
- WHO **donated 5000 COVID tests** to the Virology Lab of the Institute of Public Health on 8 April 2020.
- With WHO/USAID support, the health **emergency operations venue at MOH** is now equipped and functional in its temporary premises, refurbished and with IT equipment.
- WHO is supporting North Macedonia as part of the **Unity Study for Sero-epidemiological studies** investigating the extent of infection in the general population, as determined by seropositivity. A standardized WHO master protocol is available that is being now tailored to country needs in terms of public health, laboratory and clinical systems, capacity, availability of resources and cultural appropriateness. Using this standardized protocol allows for comparability of data across different countries and helps to determine important epidemiological parameters (e.g. the proportion of the population that remains susceptible to infection, proportion of asymptomatic infections etc.) which inform public health action. The protocol can be accessed here: [HERE](#)

Infection control and prevention in health care settings

- WHO organized a **Virtual training on Core Components of IPC programmes and Hospital Readiness COVID-19 tools** on 6 May 2020 for hospital-based health workers and those caring for COVID-19 patients
- As part of the USAID grant to WHO preparatory activities for undertaking of rapid infection prevention and control assessment (IPC assessment) with accent to COVID – 19 for EMS, primary, secondary and tertiary care facilities including long term care for the elderly, palliative care, home-based patronage services, nursing homes and outpatient clinics have been initiated. The assessment will be undertaken in collaboration with the Macedonian Association for Control of Intra - hospital Infection <https://www.mzkihi.mk/index-en>. The assessment will be undertaken by using the WHO IPC assessment tools listed below which **have been translated in Macedonian language**:
 - WHO Infection Prevention and Control Assessment Framework: Health care facility level <https://www.who.int/infection-prevention/tools/core-components/IPCAF-facility.PDF?ua=1>
 - Hospital readiness checklist for COVID-19 http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/430210/Hospital-Readiness-Checklist.pdf?ua=1
 - National IPC assessment tool, Supporting core components for infection prevention and control programmes <https://www.who.int/infection-prevention/tools/core-components/en/>

- **Support to the World Hand Hygiene Day "Save Lives: Clean your Hands Campaign"** on 5 May. The slogan of the campaign is "**Nurses and Midwives, clean care is in your hands**". The objective is not only to promote good hand hygiene and infection prevention and control practices (COVID-19), but also to recognize the key role of nurses and midwives in preventing avoidable infections. WHO MKD translated 2-pager about Hand Hygiene & COVID-19 to be distributed to relevant facilities and through social media channels. The WHO campaign materials have been shared with the Ministry of Health. WHO encourages engaging of Minister of Health and health authorities to participate.
- **WHO donated PPE equipment** to two specialized university clinics in Skopje.
- WHO developed a **risk assessment tool to be used by health care facilities with COVID-19 patients**. The tool is to be completed for all health workers who have been exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 patient in a health care facility. The tool will help determine the risk of COVID-19 virus infection of all HCWs who have been exposed to a COVID-19 patient and then provides recommendations for appropriate management of these HCWs, according to their infection risk.
- WHO also held on Friday 3 April 2020, a **Zoom training session in Macedonian language** open for **all Health Care workers dealing with COVID19** for the proper practices in Infection control and prevention of virus transmission in hospitals and clinical management of severe respiratory cases.
- **WHO Webinar series on IPC & COVID 19** was promoted shared with relevant national professionals:
 - **21 April:** A model hospital for IPC and management of COVID-19 patients [Didier Pittet, University of Geneva Hospitals, Geneva, Switzerland]
 - **28 April:** The SARS-CoV-2 virus modes of transmission and related IPC measures [John Conly, University of Calgary and Alberta Health Services, Calgary, Canada]
 - **5 May:** Celebrating nurses and midwives for clean care at the age of COVID-19 [Benedetta Allegranzi, IPC Hub, WHO HQ Didier Pittet, University of Geneva Hospitals, Geneva, Switzerland]
 - **NEXT 12 May – [HERE](#):** Corona virus infections among health care workers: what we know about COVID-19 and what we have learned from other outbreaks [April Baller, WHO Health Emergencies, Geneva, Switzerland Seto Wing Hong, University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital, Hong Kong, China]

The webinar **details:** Time 2pm central European time (CET); Duration 1 hour; Recordings Slides and audio recordings will be made available [HERE](#) after the webinar ; To register for each webinar please go to the campaign page [at SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands](#)

Please promote this webinar series as widely as possible within your networks. Thank you

Health Professionals

COVID -19 courses for health professionals: Translation and adaptation of the following WHO on-line COVID – 19 courses for Health Professionals has been initiated:

- Clinical Care Training for Respiratory Infections (SARI) in Macedonian language; <https://openwho.org/courses/severe-acute-respiratory-infection>
- ePROTECT Respiratory Infections in Macedonian and Albanian languages; <https://openwho.org/courses/eprotect-acute-respiratory-infections>
- How to put on and remove PPE in Macedonian and Albanian languages; <https://openwho.org/courses/IPC-PPE-EN>

Case management

- WHO organized a **Clinical management briefing on 7 May 2020** for clinicians and 36 participants from all COVID-19 designated clinics and hospitals attended.
- **Solidarity Trial**: Generating Robust data needed to show which treatments are the most effective, by North Macedonia joining the WHO SOLIDARITY Trial. This will allow also receiving WHO donation of medicines **Ramdesivir and Fapinavir** for COVID19 severe patients. **WHO held a training meeting on Solidarity trial** to all those involved in the scheme from COVID19 treating hospitals.

Planning, monitoring and evaluation of the COVID19 Response

- **WHO is supporting the country in assessing the situation in view of eventual relaxation of restrictive public health measures.** WHO guidance is available on "*Considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19*" - [Access the publication](#) . This document provides guiding principles for adapting measures (loosening/ tightening). This will be followed by:
 - Indicators (criteria) for when measures can be adapted
 - Practical advice on how to adapt measures in key settings such as schools, workplaces etc.
 - WHO emphasizes that there should be gradual alleviation, close monitoring and constant calibration of measures. **As measures are loosened, surveillance should be tightened. Different surveillance approaches (identification, confirmation, isolation, and contact identification and quarantine, event-based surveillance, sentinel ILI/SARI surveillance etc.) should be applied.**
- WHO continuing the roll out of the **Partners Platform for the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP)**: Onboarding has taken place supporting North Macedonia to link with international support; the Country Preparedness and Response Plan has been uploaded for increasing capacity for 2000 COVID19 cases. The country is active on the platform <https://covid-19-response.org>
- SPRP includes health systems continuity, the Platform will have a **9th Pillar** for assessment of priority actions to maintain essential health services.
- **COVID-19 Health System Response Monitor (HSRM)** has been formally launched by WHO EURO and the European Observatory for Health systems. North Macedonia is participating. <https://www.covid19healthsystem.org/mainpage.aspx>
- A Ceremony for **launching of the USAID / WHO joint support** to the country to help contain and mitigate the COVID19 virus spread <https://un.mk/ceremony-for-launching-of-the-usaid-who-support-to-the-country-to-help-mitigate-the-spread-of-covid19/> was organized on 7 April 2020. This act of solidarity is directed mainly to support the health staff at the frontline of this fight against the virus: to ensure they have the means and the skills to protect themselves and control the infection all health care settings not only in treatment centers. A large part of the grant will also help the Institute of Public Health to continue its remarkable work in tracing and testing and early identification of the cases.

WHO continues to be actively engaged in:

- In risk communication targeted messages and developed many messages and infographics in national languages for display at MOH media channels and other. *WHO* [Facebook/Twitter](#) ; *MoH* [Facebook/Twitter](#); [WHO Europe website for COVID-19](#)

- Providing technical advice and support to many national and international partners for stepping up everyone's engagement in halting the virus spread and its impact on North Macedonia.
- Ensuring lab and testing tools are available for COVID19 related testing kits and PPE.
- Assisting the MOH in gaps and needs assessment and bridging those gaps for better health system coping and response.
- Establishing bilateral partnerships, resource mobilization, and joint plans to address gaps and needs of the MOH.
- Sustaining professional and technical knowledge of all health care workers in the country through 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/>
- Tracking the epidemiological spread of the virus, supports early warning system and keep communities and frontline responders informed with the latest technical guidance.
- Contributing to the UN in the country to make sure that timely procurement takes place and supporting the newly set UN coordination mechanism for the COVID19. [1UN MK@facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/1UNMK/)

NORTH MACEDONIA STRATEGIC RESPONSE AND ACTION

- North Macedonia mobilized an all-of-government action to fight this new coronavirus, including scaling up emergency response mechanisms in all sectors. Actions and readjustments of measures are continuous and monitoring of the situation is ongoing on daily basis. The country is in declared national emergency Announced by the President of the Republic on 18 March 2020 and later renewed for another month.
- On the health front, the country is working hard on now to ensure its COVID19 hospitalization surge capacity with the necessary personnel are in place with the influx of additional cases in recent days.

The Ministry of Health increased public health measures, such as rapid identification, diagnosis and management of the cases, identification and follow up of the contacts, infection prevention and control in health care settings, implementation of health measures for travelers, awareness-raising in the population and risk communication and counter misinformation as well as minimizing social and economic impact through multisectoral partnerships.

IN THE PAST 48 HOURS:

Risk communication

- Ministry of Health published a [video](#) summarizing the key measures for COVID-19 prevention and protection.

Health workforce

- 209 of the 241 health professionals infected with coronavirus recovered and most of them have returned to work.

Socioeconomic Impact

- The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (WIIW) foresees in its latest research that the Macedonian GDP will decrease by 5 % in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Only few months ago, in February, WIIW predicted a decrease of the Macedonian GDP of only 1.7 %, while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted a decrease of 4 %, similar to the projections of the Finance Ministry of Macedonia, the World Bank and other financial institutions. WIIW also predicts a deflation of 1 % in Macedonia, increase of the unemployment rate to 21 %, and a budget deficit of 2.5 %.
- 23 861 companies applied for the governmental measures for subsidies for salaries of 14,500 denars per employee. Of all applications, 2,377 came from the hospitality sector, 253 from tour operators, 2,177 from the transport sector,

and all other come from different business sectors. As for the other measures of the government, Public Revenue Office received 816 applications for the measure for tax relaxation policies, which frees businesses from the obligation for payment of personal income taxes, while for the measure for suspended obligation for payment of profit taxes applied 1,019 companies.

- 8 700 citizens that use the mobile telephone application for the governmental measure for return of value-added tax “MyVat” decided to donate their tax-return to the state fund for dealing with COVID-19.
- 181 start-up companies go to the final phase of the project “Startup 2.” The budget for this project is 1.5 million euros which will be used for investment plans of the companies for faster growth and economic recovery after the COVID-19 crisis. Around 150 companies are micro enterprises. The goal of this project is to encourage the research and development processes of businesses around the country.

GAPS/NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

- Technical needs at the health front:
 - Risk assessment for easing the curfews.
 - Assess the socioeconomic impact on Health system during the crisis and after the crisis
 - Determine the level of immunity to the virus in the population
 - Review of the testing algorithms in consideration of the strategy to increase testing.
 - Increase use of eHealth and telemedicine to improve and facilitate population preventive interventions
 - Strengthen epidemiological capacity
 - Enhance planning capacity for transition strategy after lockdown.
- Critical needs:
 - Maintaining Essential health and social services
 - intensifying risk communication;
 - socioeconomic relief for vulnerable groups and employment protection.
 - Protecting health care workers whether those working in the COVID-19 designated facilities or elsewhere countrywide because of the community transmission.
 - Mental Health Support to health workers and the public especially the vulnerable ones.
 - Laboratory Kits and reagents; Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); Mechanical Ventilators/Respirators
- Challenges:
 - Procurement : Access to local or international supplies and mainly respirators for the critical needs identified because of international shortages.
 - Shortage in health workforce as the situation progresses
 - Ensuring sustainability of the health facilities and health care during and after the crisis.
 - Outreach and social support to the vulnerable and community compliance with measures
 - Ensuring continuity of treatment and access to regular health care for all citizens including the vulnerable groups with other diseases and pathologies.
 - Fighting Isolation and scaling up community engagement in the regions