

# SITUATION REPORT #4

## COVID-19



UNITED NATIONS  
NORTH MACEDONIA

2 APRIL 2020

**384** total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country.

**2** is the age of the youngest patient infected.

**17** patients fully recovered and released from hospital.

**11** is the number of deaths associated with an infection of COVID-19 in North Macedonia.

### KEY GOVERNMENT MEASURES AND RESPONSE



#### TRAVEL

- All movement between 21:00 and 05:00hrs is prohibited across the entire territory of the country, with further restrictions for elderly people and youth up until 18 years of age. Additional restrictions introduced for weekends, with movement prohibited from 16:00 until 05:00hrs.
- Restaurants, bars, clubs and casinos are closed for business as part of the anti-coronavirus measures. Gathering of groups of people of above five individuals in public spaces such as parks and city squares is also prohibited.
- All public transport to and inside the city of Kumanovo has been stopped. As in all other cities, all shops inside malls, except food stores and supermarkets are closed as part of the increased measures to prevent further spreading of COVID-19 in the city.
- State of emergency has been declared across the whole territory of the country on 18 March for the period of 30 days. Debar and Centar Zhupa municipalities remain under quarantine, with all travel to these areas restricted and controlled by local authorities.
- International travel to and from the country is severely limited due to imposed measures within the country and in many other countries as well.
- Travelers returning from COVID-19 affected areas, regardless of their residence status, are subject to mandatory 14-day quarantine.



#### HEALTH

- The country response in North Macedonia is whole of government response and a coordinated governmental mechanism and response is in place whereby the Ministry of Health is coordinating the health response through its responsible expert committees including the infectious diseases commission, operational MoH Task Force for COVID-19 and the Crisis Management Committee.
- MoH has initiated systematic testing (date?) and set 14 COVID-19 screening and testing points countrywide with the support of the private doctors' association.
- Mobile teams for testing have been also established and will be designated primarily for older people and high-risk communities.
- Laboratory capacities for testing are being gradually increased.
- For Primary health care, Treatment Algorithms for general practitioner is being distributed via "Moj Termin" with a short info-list for classification and management of suspected COVID-19 cases.
- MoH and Institute of Public Health are implementing 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.
- Every evening, the Institute of Public health publishes a detailed epidemiological report up to the day before on [www.iph.mk](http://www.iph.mk)

- The capacity of the University Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile States (Skopje) has been increased with the construction of a temporary field hospital adjacent to the existing one. MoH is working on further increase of capacity and personnel throughout the country.
- North Macedonia has joined the global WHO Solidarity Study for COVID-19 case management to generate robust data needed to show which treatments are the most effective.
- The Agency for Drugs and Medical Devices (MALMED) approved the combined treatment for COVID-19: Chloroquine and Azithromycin.
- Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) has been developed in consultation with the Government and UN Country Team (UNCT), looking into health and socio-economic component impact of the crisis. The gaps and the needs related to the public health response have been identified based on the rapid assessment of the relevant country mechanisms and response structures, based on the WHO "Operational Planning Guidelines to Support Country Preparedness."

For more information on the health response and epidemiological situation see WHO Flash Updates available at: <https://un.mk/reports/>



#### ECONOMY

- The strongest economic shock is expected in Q2 2020; potential stabilization in Q3 and rebound of growth in Q4 (MoF) depending on the intensity of disease outbreak and the success of mitigation measures.
- The new set of measures to curb the impact of COVID-19 includes:
- Implementing the joint proposal of the CEFTA and Transport Community Secretariats to facilitate the transport and trade of basic products in Western Balkans (WB) and between WB and EU by restricting country measures only to those essential to stop the outbreak. The customs rules remain within CEFTA and SAA regulations;
  - Postponing the deadline for repayment of Government bond (guarantying ex-YU foreign currency savings) and reallocating the funding for COVID-19 response.
  - Postponing deadlines for submission of municipalities' annual accounts for the period of the emergency;
  - Reallocating surpluses on public agencies' accounts to Budget for COVID-19 response i.e. to support legal entities with financial difficulties;
  - Reporting to Council of Europe about the restricted freedoms and human rights as result of the measures to limit COVID 19 outbreak (as per article 15 of European Convention on Human Rights);
  - Reallocating EU funding available on Government accounts for COVID-19

## KEY GOVERNMENT MEASURES AND RESPONSE

response on temporary basis. The funds will be returned post crisis, as per EU Commission instructions.

- Banning warehouse sale of citrus products for those without retail license;
- Freezing time count for legal deadlines in criminal and misdemeanor procures, extending mandates of jury members whose mandate has expired and postponing execution of prison sentences up to 3 years, except for those reaching statute of limitations.
- Financial support for the private sector, by providing a minimum wage of 14,500 MKD per employee for April and May, and alternatively, subsidized 50% of mandatory social contributions, conditional to saving the same number of workers by September 2020 and not applying to those who received a net salary higher than 39,000 MKD. Those who will make profit at the end of 2020, will return half of the profit made. The measure also covers the media sector, athletes/ sport workers and 141 people from the art sector, while the decision for self-employed (e.g. craftworkers) is pending,
- Monthly salary for citizens who lost their jobs during the crisis in the amount of 50% of their average monthly net salary over the last 24 months for a period of 6 months.
- Minimum wage of 14,500 MKD for April and May for all elected and appointed officials on national and local level except in health institutions, while members of management and supervisory boards of the executive and local governments, and council presidents will work without compensation during the crisis.
- Fee of 7,000 MKD for April and May per household for persons engaged within the informal economy and their fast inclusion in the social security system (estimated 20,000 new beneficiaries);
- Agreed postponing of bank loans for citizens for a period of six months and reprogramming and/or facilitating conditions for companies' loans.
- Postponed lease payments for people using social housing. Similar decisions for companies is pending.
- Additional €8 million for interest-free loans (€3,000-90,000) for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises depending on the number of employees in the Development Bank of North Macedonia along with € 50 million of favorable loans for investment and projects to safeguard companies liquidity.
- Compulsory use of the first part of the holiday leaves until 31 May 2020.
- Establishment of a COVID-19 Solidarity Fund.
- Reduction of copyright agreements by state institutions.

The new set of measures were harmonized and agreed among social partners during the 31 March 2020 session of the Economic and Social Council. Social partners jointly stated that the main priority during this period is the health and lives of workers and citizens, but that the situation must not be allowed to become labour market crisis and that workers should not bear the burden alone. The emphasized the importance of constructive social dialogue to contribute to preserving the dignity of the work-force and at the same time help the Macedonian economy.

Due to the intensification of the agricultural season, especially for vegetable crops, the Government has exempted farmers who perform planting/seeding of spring crops from weekend movement restrictions. Other farmers, livestock keepers and agricultural workers can perform field activities during the restricted hours with special permission from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE)

To facilitate trade of agricultural produce and livestock among farmers, producers and buyers, MAFWE has promoted the use of its interactive web tool within the existing [Agricultural Market Information System](#), called

“Supply-Demand”. It helps food markets to function uninterruptedly enabling producers, consumers, traders and processors quick and easy access to data on available quantities and prices of domestic agricultural products and livestock in real time.



## EDUCATION

- All educational institutions remain closed until further notice.
- One parent of children under the age of 10, and a parent of children with disabilities (regardless of age) allowed to stay at home for childcare during the school closure
- Parents of children with disabilities (regardless of age) also allowed to stay at home for childcare during the school closure;
- Ministry of Education and Science promoting online learning opportunities and education programmes through the national broadcaster and other means.
- UNICEF supported [National Digital Platform](#) which is one-stop-shop for sharing online lessons, currently offers 500 lessons for primary school children. The platform is expanding to also include video lessons prepared by teachers for children in pre-primary, secondary and vocational education.

## KEY GAPS IDENTIFIED AND EMERGING NEEDS

### HEALTH

The most important immediate priority is to ensure that the health system can cope with the increasing numbers of cases that require intensive management and to protect the health work-force.

Critical needs: laboratory kits and reagents; personal protective equipment (PPE); mechanical ventilators/respirators; intensifying risk communication.

Challenges:

- Protecting health care workers, whether those working in the COVID-19 designated facilities or elsewhere country-wide because of the community transmission; and coping with potential shortage of health workers
- Procurement: hampered access to local or international markets for supplies and equipment (ventilators) due to shortages and logistical constraints;
- Ensuring sustainability of the health facilities and health care during and after the crisis;
- Community support and outreach activities for the most 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 for the elderly and disabled;
- Compliance of citizens with the Government instructions to self-isolate.

### SOCIO - ECONOMIC IMPACT

The impact of COVID 19 is far-reaching, with considerable human suffering and major economic disruptions across the world; it is difficult to estimate due to the unknown dynamic and intensity of spread and consequently the rigorosity and time span of Government measures in the country and abroad. At this stage it is thus only possible to identify the immediate triggers and most affected sectors and population

Economically, the strongest shock in North Macedonia is expected in the second quarter of 2020 with spill over effects from the immediately affected sectors to the broader economy. The economic crisis will impact both, supply (as result of

## KEY GAPS IDENTIFIED AND EMERGING NEEDS

closing manufacturing facilities) and demand (due to reduced purchasing power and the overall fear and uncertainty among the citizens and the corporate sector). With highest, 22% share in the gross domestic product (GDP), the trade, transport, hospitality and food services would be the most affected from the demand side. The manufacturing industry with 16% of GDP and about 161,000 employees, which makes it the second most important sector in the economy next to the public sector, will be the most exposed on the supply side. This will particularly affect export-oriented industries, such as textile and leather industries, as well as agriculture production and food processing industry. In addition, some of the FDIs in the automotive industry, which have strong impact on the overall GDP and exports of North Macedonia, have already temporarily closed operations due to cancelled orders. As a small and open economy, North Macedonia will also suffer from decreased external demand of its key trade partners.

The combination of factors above will strongly decrease companies' liquidity and result in workers' lay-offs and lack of existential means for the self-employed and the informal workers. Disruption in the agricultural activity is also at risk, both due to the restricted field work and inability to sell at the green markets which particularly affects the smallholder farmers. As a net importer of food and basic agricultural inputs for food production, the country may face challenges to food security due to shortage of animal feed, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, veterinary medicines and other core inputs that could affect agricultural production.

On the psychosocial side the situation is equally challenging. Suspension or delay in educational activities will affect multiple aspects within the society, coupled with psycho-social impact for children, elderly, families and communities and vulnerable groups. Currently, some 360,000 children and young people from North Macedonia are missing out on formal education, while the disruption of TVET and tertiary education will have further negative impact the labour market. Children are at heightened risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence amidst intensifying containment measures — a major concern considering high prevalence of violence against children in the home. Disruption of social care services and assistance affects the impoverished households the most, with children or elderly, Roma and seekers of preventive health care, such as pregnant women and breastfeeding. The impact will also be different for men and women, with the latter playing a disproportionate role in response to COVID-19 and are more exposed to economic shock and domestic violence. Gender-based violence may substantially increase during lockdown with abusive partner, while services and shelters for victims of violence are not operational during curfew.

## UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

**United Nations in North Macedonia** is collectively supporting the Government and international partners with the procurement of urgent medical and protective supplies and equipment for immediate response. In addition to that, UN agencies, funds and programmes are — in close coordination with its Government counterparts — conducting the following activities or adjusting their work to support response:

World Health Organization (WHO) procured locally the urgently needed PPE and lab supplies for the IPH Virology Lab and is currently delivering additional COVID-19 testing kits in support of the strategic national scale up of testing, as per WHO guidance. WHO will also support the laboratory of the National Public Health Institute to upgrade the software for rapid delivery of the results from performed tests by improving the system of tracking the samples and introduction of bar-coding. IT equipment for upgrading of the capacities of the laboratory will be also donated. WHO is providing support to the newly

## UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

established Emergency Operational Centre for COVID-19, within the MoH, which is responsible for monitoring, collection and data surveillance of all COVID-19 patients. WHO is supporting the center with essential IT equipment (computers, laptops, printer, LCD screen), as well as with essential furniture.

WHO contributes to the efforts the UN in the country to make sure that timely procurement takes place and also supports the UN COVID-19 coordination mechanism, where UN RC takes the lead to streamline joint and effective UN response efforts.

COVID-19 provides an opportunity to strengthen overall country capacities for health security and investments should allow for longer-term, wider benefits, in line with national needs for sustaining critical capacities to prevent, detect and respond to health emergencies. A three-month workplan has been developed and endorsed into the WHO HQ platform.

In line with the strategic shift to increasing testing, maintaining quality COVID-19 care and essential care and protecting health care workers, WHO support in the coming phase will focus on:

- Infection control and prevention in all health settings.
- Procurement of ventilators and protective personal equipment.
- Strengthening surveillance capacity, identification, testing and quarantine with special focus on vulnerable groups (elderly and migrants).

To increase the access of persons under the mandate of **UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** to reliable information about how to stay safe from COVID-19, UNHCR North Macedonia has shared World Health Organization materials in [Arabic](#), [Dari](#), [Farsi](#), [Pashtu](#), [English](#), [Russian](#), [Turkish](#), and local languages [Macedonian](#), [Albanian](#) and [Romani](#), on its [Facebook page](#). This was done in addition to the previous displaying of printed versions of the same materials at all Reception and Transit Centres in the country, the Border Police Station in Gevgelija, and the office of the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association in Shuto Orizari.

To continue to maintain direct contact with refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness, in view of the limitations of contact for UNHCR staff imposed by the COVID-19 epidemic, UNHCR North Macedonia now operates a hotline administered by professional UNHCR staff.

**International Organization for Migration (IOM)** is providing medical assistance to the migrants, as well as provision of hygienic kits for the migrants and PPEs for the personnel in the reception sites for migrants. Moreover, IOM works on education and awareness raising of the migrants on COVID-19 prevention and protection.

**International Labour Organization (ILO)** formed Task Team on Covid-19 and the World of Work that will work on the impact of the crisis on the employment and labour market. The objectives of the Task Team is to develop policy and guidance notes that would help to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the likely impacts of the Covid-19 crisis over the short- and medium-term on employment and labour market? and
- 2) What are plausible policy responses that the Government and its social partners should consider in order to mitigate the short- and medium-term impacts of the crisis?

ILO will roll out enterprise survey, which aims to support employers' organizations and the Economic and Social Council to assess the needs of enterprises resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. It would initially scan the impact of COVID-19 on enterprises and their business performance.

## UN SUPPORT FOR RESPONSE

United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) continues with social mobilisation using digital communication channels focusing on a broad range of materials to protect children and families and support the continuity of quality health care, education and social services.

- UNICEF messaging and digital activation campaigns on risk communication including hand washing and communication to support children learning at home and psychosocial support have reached wide audiences. In just under a month over 620,000 people have been reached and 40,000 engaged on local social media platforms and over 72,000 unique users (of which 69,000 are new) have engaged with content published on the UNICEF local website.
- Building on a volunteer initiative, UNICEF started work with 22 youth volunteers to design a volunteering in the time of COVID-19 initiative which is expected to be launched for wider volunteer activation in mid-April.

The helplines for psychosocial support and counselling of children and their parents/caregivers were set up on 25 March; to-date some 40 callers were provided with support, including 7 adolescents. The helplines are operated by the professionals of the University Clinic of Psychiatry with UNICEF support, and include separate lines for adolescents and their parents (078 378 728); the helpline for parents of children with disabilities (070 291 574); and for children at school age and parents of preschool and school age children (072 912 676).

UN Development Programme (UNDP) is working on education products for persons with disabilities including short videos, easy to read materials and audio materials for gaining life and social skills, social literacy, basic practical counting/use of money, basics communication skills towards employment, where and when to health care services, how to protect themselves from different kind of violent.

UNDP is also working on self-employment measures including an on-line training on "Entrepreneurship and business skills development". Through the 4-day training, trainees will be able to develop their business idea and submit to the trainers for further evaluation;

As part of the efforts to mitigate the COVID-19 effects on the economy, UNDP will produce a series of simple and useful basic business tips & tricks focusing on small and medium enterprises via vivid and animated visuals. The goal is to support small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) by presenting quality information on how to manage the business in those circumstances and how to operate through emergency and disaster. The products will be placed online and shared by various social media platforms, as well as through economic/business news info portals.

The World Bank is exploring options with the Government of North Macedonia to support response such as the use of World Bank COVID-19 fast-track facility primarily oriented to support interventions and policies to prevent, detect and respond to the threat posed by COVID-19 and strengthen national systems for public health preparedness, and, also, to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic on households, in particular poor ones. Under the facility, North Macedonia was initially allocated USD 12.7 million, an amount that the Government could be complemented with additional IBRD financing. In addition to the COVID-19 fast track facility, the Bank is discussing restructuring and reallocation of uncommitted projects funds from projects under implementation to respond to the COVID-19 emergency.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) has supported the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy with a very initial assessment of the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the food and agriculture sector and the specific interventions necessary to keep food supply chains alive, protect the most vulnerable and mitigate the pandemic's impacts across the food system. FAO has a [website](#) dedicated to COVID-19, while a special [Q&A section](#) on the pandemic impact on food and agriculture is also available. The first FAO policy brief [COVID-19 and the risk to food supply chains: how to respond](#) from the Chief Economist and Assistant Director-General of FAO was issued this week, providing clear recommendations on measures to consider in order to keep the food supply chain alive in these times of crisis. In addition, to support the Member States with timely and credible information to keep the food and agriculture systems alive during the pandemic, FAO analysed past experiences and provides a compilation of policy responses with their pros and cons for agricultural and food systems, available [here](#).

The [COVID-19 Partnership Platform](#) – a global web platform to support coordination and transparency of national needs and international partners support for COVID-19 response has been developed. The North Macedonia Country Page within this platform is currently being populated and will soon be available for partners' inputs.

## MAIN LINKS

### Government

<https://koronavirus.gov.mk/>

### Ministry of health

<http://zdravstvo.gov.mk/korona-virus/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/zdravstvomk/>

### Institute of public health

[www.iph.mk](http://www.iph.mk)

### WHO North Macedonia

<https://www.facebook.com/WHOMKD>  
<https://twitter.com/WHOMKD>

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

If symptoms (fever, tiredness, dry cough) occur, individuals should contact health care provider or the designated epidemiological contact telephones service and inform about their travel history and symptoms; they should not visit the health facility unless told to do so.

### In case of symptoms and asymptomatic travelers

CPH Bitola	071 261 330	CPH Skopje	071 289 614
CPH Veles	071 219 278	CPH Strumica	072 235 543
CPH Gevgelija	078 545 444	CPH Tetovo	075 240 464
CPH Kochani	071 373 913	RU Gostivar	076 365 161
CPH Kumanovo	070 215 851	CPH Shtip	078 365 613
CPH Ohrid	070 723 029	IPH Skopje	078 387 194
CPH Prilep	076 475 747		

### Psychological support

Parents of (pre)school children	072 912 676
Self-isolated adults	072 919 009
Citizens of Debar and Center Zhupa	070 241 807

### General information

"Alo Doctor" Call Center	02 15 123
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