



JULY 2020



TIMELINE HIGHLIGHTS

JUNE

- 10** UNICEF-supported education platform has reached 2.4 million views, with new content developed regularly
- 17-18** 2021-2025 SDCF Strategic Priorities consulted with Sector Working Groups (Environment and Climate Action; Employment, Education and Social Protection)
- 18** FAO introduced [Legal Guide on Land Consolidation](#), based on study of good practices for land consolidation legislation in Europe, including North Macedonia.
- 20** World Refugee Day, launch of 'Everyone can make a difference. Every action counts' video in [English](#), [Macedonian](#), [Albanian](#) UNHCR and partners
- 25** UNFPA video training sessions for all levels of healthcare gynecologists (treatment of pregnant women during COVID-19)
- 29** UNICEF launched a child-focused animated video on hand washing in [Macedonian](#), [Albanian](#) and [Romani](#) as part of its risk communication around COVID-19

JULY

- 3** 2021-2025 SDCF Strategic Priorities consulted and endorsed by the extended Joint Steering Committee
- 7-17** 2020 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, with [Macedonian delegation](#) on 14 July presenting the first [Voluntary National Review \(VNR\)](#)
- 8** 2nd FAO-implemented project under the Green Climate Fund Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme [launched during an online event](#)
- 9** Launch of FAO-supported online training for tackling lumpy skin disease preparedness for veterinarians. Manual available in [Macedonian](#) and [Albanian](#) language.
- 15** Parliamentary elections held in North Macedonia
- 16** UNFPA and the British Embassy in Skopje started new partnership to support survivors of gender-based violence during COVID-19 pandemic.

EDITORIAL by the UN Resident Coordinator

I am delighted to share with you the first issue of the Sustainable Development Bulletin, through which we want to bring to your attention the current and upcoming information on activities of the United Nations in North Macedonia, sustainable development priorities and specific topics of interest.

We are launching this information-rich compilation in challenging times, when we are trapped between the desire to return to 'normal' and COVID-19 caution fatigue, a paradox of summer 2020.

Relaxation measures have been introduced across Europe, although some – the opening of borders – quickly retracted. As we learn how to live with and persevere with the virus among us, we have unfortunately lowered our guards over the last few weeks, which has led to significant increase in new infections across the Western Balkans, including North Macedonia. On top of this, the country has held parliamentary elections in July and a government formation is now eagerly anticipated and a top priority.

We are all tired and need a break: from COVID-19 and from challenges the situation has exacerbated. For most of us, this year's vacation will be in North Macedonia – a great opportunity to rediscover the beauties of the country, but also to support the local economy. But whether going to the beach, hiking in forests or mountains, talking a walk in a park or visiting friends and family, we need to keep following health recommendations to slow the spread of the pandemic.

Wear a mask. Keep your distance. Wash your hands, frequently and meticulously.

This is our reality for the time being. And yes, we can go to a beach if we respect preventive measures. It



may be less convenient, but it saves lives. And yes, we can visit or spend time with friends and family: but better outside, while keeping distance.

We will be able to go back to normal even faster if we accept these minor inconveniences. And more than that – we can make it better if we learn to live with it, if we accept the challenges posed by the biggest global health hazard of recent times, if we accept that each generation faces challenges that need to be overcome. Individually and jointly, we have a duty that goes beyond merely surpassing this challenge. We have an obligation towards all future generations to learn from the past and build a better tomorrow. We have a duty to build our community, our resilience and our future. We have a commitment to life. And we must prevent any unnecessary life lost.

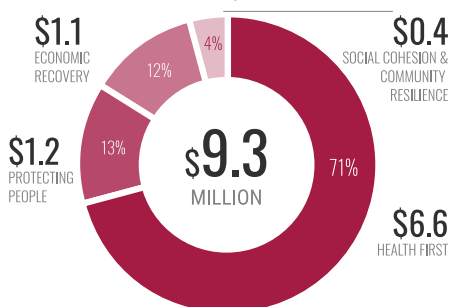
Living with the virus means living with and respecting the measures. Wear a mask and save lives. Keep your distance to protect your loved ones and others in society. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly. It is our joint responsibility.

Rossana Dudziak
UN Resident Coordinator in North Macedonia

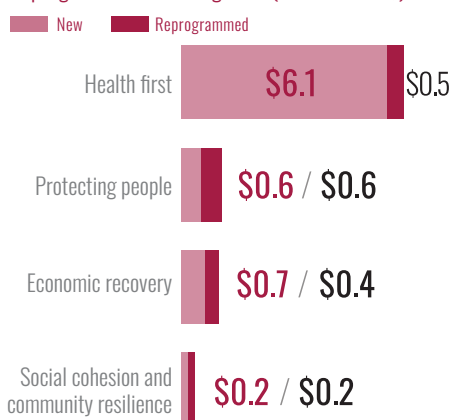
COVID-19 RESPONSE CRF, impact assessments, funding

COVID-19 RESPONSE SUPPORT THROUGH UN

Grants breakdown by CRF pillar (in million US\$)



Reprogrammed vs. new grants (in million US\$)



Reprogrammed vs. new loans (in million US\$)

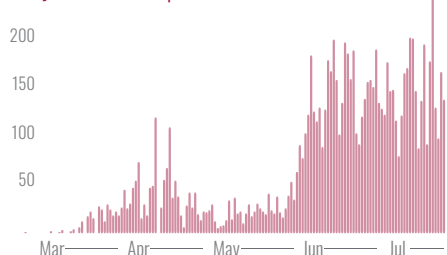


Commentary Funding for the UN System implemented or channelled COVID-19 response has been skewed towards health and macroeconomic support, with financing for the remaining socio-economic categories, such as economic recovery, social protection and community resilience, still lagging behind. A greater portion of the resources are new funds dedicated for response. Financial data includes secured funding and announced funding pending approval. Source: UN North Macedonia

LATEST EPIDEMIOLOGICAL DATA (23 July 2020)

9,547 CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASES
442 COVID-19-RELATED FATALITIES
4,583 CONFIRMED CASES PER 1,000,000 PEOPLE
212 FATALITIES PER 1,000,000 PEOPLE

Daily new cases reported



For latest data see covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/mk

COVID-19 Response Framework (CRF)

[North Macedonia CRF](#), providing the overall assessment of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in the country and suggesting mid- and long-term response measures in response to the crisis, was discussed with the Government in June. As a follow up, UN was requested to cost strategic priorities to facilitate response in the next six to twelve months.

Impact assessments, analyses, response

Several in-depth analyses focusing on specific issues and most vulnerable groups have been conducted by UN agencies, funds and programmes to assist the Government and relevant institutions to design and implement evidence-based policy interventions in response to the crisis.

International Labour Organization's (ILO) nowcasting model looks at how the reduced economic activity due to lockdowns or other disruptions has contributed to the reduction of employment. Globally, the crisis has shrank economic activity and working time to an unprecedented extent, with certain jobs likely to recover after temporary closures, while others will be lost for good.

[Section 4 of the updated Rapid Assessment](#) provides some guidance on labour vulnerabilities in specific sectors and the enterprises at risk in North Macedonia, suggesting where jobs are more likely to be lost. Estimates in the second quarter of 2020 suggest a decline of 14.1% working hours (compared to 14.5% across the Western Balkans). The impact in this quarter mostly materialized through shorter working hours and temporary leaves, but prolonged situation may lead to people being pushed into unemployment and inactivity. Many of these workers will face a loss of income and deeper poverty in the medium to long term.

Due to variations in factors driving the decline in working hours the narrow focus on unemployment does not allow a proper assessment of the impact on labour market at this point. Policy makers have been advised to consider all available data before finalising the employment retention measures.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) built a rapid survey that collects data from operators along agrifood value chains – suppliers, farmers, processors, wholesalers and retailers – in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region to explore how the pandemic has been affecting domestic agrifood value chains.

Two consequent survey rounds (May-June 2020, with 3,000 respondents), reflected in the [FAO regional food market situation and policy bulletin](#), suggest the pandemic has had negative impact on transportation, storage, sales, financial situation, input availability and labour markets of many ECA countries.

The slowing down of food exports because of tightened safety control and diminished sales of small producers due to disruptions of local markets and reduced demand has been a major concern.

United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Inclusive Education, Learning & Distance Learning in North Macedonia – Analysis Post COVID-19 report argues there is a significant correlation between the difficulties in accessing the internet and social inequities. The digital divide/inequality can take various forms hence there is a need to restructure the education system to respond to the strengths, needs and aspirations of all students by introducing inclusive principles such as universal design for learning across the entire system, from curriculum and material design to classroom management, teaching and assessment. To maximize the potential of all students and to adjust to the changing skillset required by the market, systems must be flexible and allow learners of all ages to take control and be responsive to new trends and innovation.

UN Women conducted a mapping of impact of COVID-19 on the socio-economic situation of women in 20 municipalities to identify immediate interventions and provide recommendations for gender-specific measures in the post-recovery period. Local governments have remained at the forefront of response targeting the most vulnerable groups – single mothers, elderly and people with disabilities, medical staff and other professionals at the front line of dealing with the crisis.

Supported by UN Women, the Working Group on Gender Equality within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy assessed the situation of women in agriculture and rural areas and developed a set of recommendations for gender-responsive measures to address COVID-19 implications on women in agriculture, including rapid implementation of measures for financial support to women farmers and improving their access to formal markets and end-consumers, increasing the availability of information in rural areas, and facilitating increased registration of women as agricultural producers to achieve greater coverage of health and social insurance.

Results from rapid gender assessment on the [Impact of COVID-19 on Women's and Men's Lives and Livelihoods](#) from 10 ECA countries, including [North Macedonia](#), confirmed the disproportionate impact of the crisis on women, with over 15% losing jobs and 41% facing reduced paid working hours; up to 50% salary decrease and more time spent on unpaid domestic work activity.

Through July, UN continued to provide in-kind response support. UNICEF provided 7 ventilators, 5,000 testing kits, 20 pulse oxymeters, personal protective equipment and other supplies. See [consolidated UN response activity tracker](#).

COORDINATION Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

A framework for accelerated sustainable development

Achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) requires active involvement of all stakeholders: United Nations system, national, regional and local authorities, private sector, civil society, academia and people at large. Success depends on pursuing a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach and vision.

The global and localized communities need to be mobilised for accelerated action and the implementation of Agenda 2030, which also requires an agile, cohesive and responsive UN development system that can support countries' priorities and people's needs.

2021-2025 priorities

The 2021-2025 North Macedonia UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF), in development since end-2019, is the UN collective offer to support the country in addressing SDG priorities and gaps, placing key emphasis on leaving no one behind.

SDCF is being developed through participatory and consultative process, in close partnership with the Government. It is informed by national prioritization, planning, implementation and reporting vis-à-vis Agenda 2030, and geared towards addressing developmental challenges and context as highlighted in the Common Country Analysis. The analysis highlights development solutions or 'SDGs accelerators' – solutions or interventions where

implementation can accelerate the achievement of more than one SDG.

For 2021-2025 North Macedonia SDCF, SDGs accelerators were grouped into **three strategic priorities** and **four outcomes** or high-level expected results that will guide the work of the UN in North Macedonia over the next five years, with the vision to improve the quality of lives of people in North Macedonia, especially those left behind:

[1] Sustained and inclusive economic and social development

Outcome 1 • Improvement of the **living standard** of all people in North Macedonia through equal access to decent work, productive employment and inclusive business ecosystem; and

Outcome 2 • Achieving universal access to and improved **quality of social services** – quality healthcare, education and social and child protection services.

[2] Climate action, natural resources and disaster risk management

Outcome 3 • Ensuring people live in **clean and healthy environment**, through strengthening the climate action, improved sustainable management of the natural resources and preserving biodiversity.

[3] Transparent and accountable democratic governance

Outcome 4 • Improvement of **democratic governance** through improved rule of law;

enhanced policy making processes and institutional strengthening for better design and delivery of public services.

SDCF process: next steps

Having commenced at the end of 2019 and with most consultations envisaged to take place during the first half of 2020, the SDCF process has been significantly affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

Most stakeholder consultations have been conducted online or remotely, with the first round concluded on 3 July through the meeting of the extended Joint Steering Committee hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Consultations and associated processes such as UN Country Team (UNCT) configuration continue, with finalization of the SDCF document scheduled for early September and Government endorsement expected in October, which will be followed by the signature of SDCF by UN entities and the Government.

Implementation of SDCF will be ensured through development of annual workplans and governed by the high-level Joint Steering Committee and supporting technical programme structures. The progress will be monitored through a set of national development indicators.

2021-2025 SDCF NORTH MACEDONIA THEORY OF CHANGE

Identified challenges	Causes	Reinforced by	Addressed by SDCF
Poor human capital outcomes	Slow and dichotomous growth	Social norms	UN value proposition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normative mandate • Politically neutral • Knowledge network • Convening power • Leveraging partners / resources • Credibility
Unemployment and poverty	Weak rule of law and inefficient administration	Values	UNDAF 2016-2020 evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen inter-agency cooperation • Program design & M&E • Sustainability of UN interventions • Sustainability of financing • Coordination of development partners
Social exclusion and inequalities	Poor public health, education and social protection	Behaviour	
Lack of policy cohesion	Climate change and unsustainable practices		Guiding principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave no one behind • Human rights-based approach • Gender equality & women's empowerment • Resilience • Sustainability • Accountability
Corruption, low trust in institutions			
Environmental degradation and disaster			

IN FOCUS Irregular mixed-movements & associated protection risks

The Western Balkans route has for a decade now witnessed movements of refugees and migrants. Although closed for free movement of refugees moving from Greece towards the western EU countries, as it was the case in 2015-2016, irregular movements using precarious smuggling channels organized by criminal networks still take place.

Over the past years, UN and partners have recorded a steady increase of irregular arrivals to North Macedonia: from **more than 17,000 in 2017**, to almost **41,000 in 2019**. The COVID-19 pandemic has not slowed down the trend, but has only made irregular movement riskier. The **first six months of 2020 saw 16,500 irregular arrivals**, a number almost identical to that over the same period in 2019.

Composition of new arrivals

People arriving are predominantly male adults – a trend since 2017. Women (1%) and children (4.7%) have accounted for 5.7% of arrivals in 2020, with **615 children** being unaccompanied or separated from their parents or legal guardians (based on self-declaration). Nationalities have been mixed, comprising both those coming from some of the most common refugee-producing countries (Afghans – 30%; Syrians 4.2%) and others (Pakistani 29%; Bangladeshi 9%).

Access to asylum

Access to asylum has been unhindered, but the vast majority of people do not seek protection in North Macedonia. By the end of May 2020, only **172 persons sought asylum** this year. The number of asylum claims in 2019 was the highest since 2016 – 490, but it still represented only 1.2% of all arrivals. The majority of asylum seekers abscond the country before their claim is decided. Despite the modest numbers, the recognition rate is low – **not a single refugee status has been granted since 2016**, with only a few subsidiary protection statuses granted. The asylum legislation is largely in line with international standards, but there is significant space for improving its implementation.

A positive aspect is that the country was among the first in Europe to adapt its system to COVID-19

and started conducting asylum interviewing online, ensuring continuity of the system.

Challenges and risks

Without effective readmission arrangements, in particular with Greece, there is a frequent practice of returning irregular arrivals without due processing and outside of legal or procedural frameworks. In some cases, this could amount to a collective expulsion. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, there has been no systemic registration of arrivals, while registration for migration management purposes was never properly established.

Irregular movements give rise to numerous risks, as moving covertly leaves people invisible to the system and exposes them to a range of dangers, without proper safety net. Protection incidents recorded by UN in 2020 have included traffic accidents resulting in death or injuries, assaults and robberies against refugees and migrants. Six refugees or migrants have lost their lives in the country in 2020 and 35 since 2015. Additionally, anti-migrant sentiments have continued to be spread on social networks and often abused in political debates.

Of particular concern has been the continued practice of **detaining children** in the Reception Center for Foreigners Gazi Baba, which has been **contrary to the established international standards**. Establishing alternative arrangements for children and vulnerable individuals is a top priority.

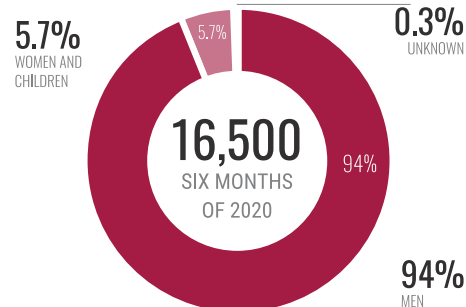
Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation, exposing refugees and migrants, the first contact officials and aid workers to high health risks. UN has supported the country's response to the pandemic in the migration management sector by investing in upgrades of the reception facilities, providing protection materials, informing refugees and migrants about COVID-19 risks, as well as through a **24/7 Help Line** and **Help Page** operated by UNHCR.

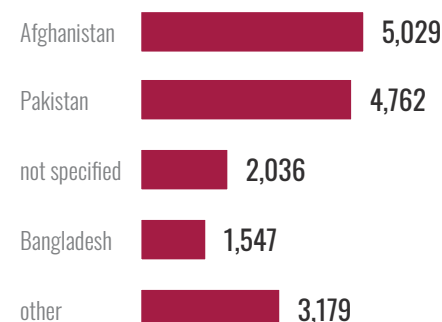
See www.unhcr.org/north-macedonia.html and www.north-macedonia.iom.int for more information.

IRREGULAR ARRIVALS IN 2020

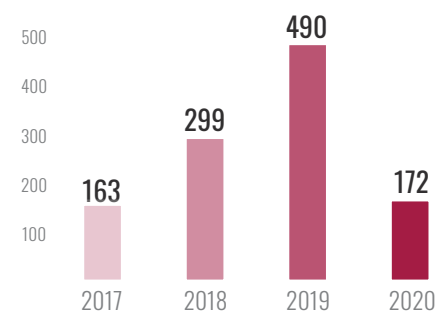
Breakdown by gender



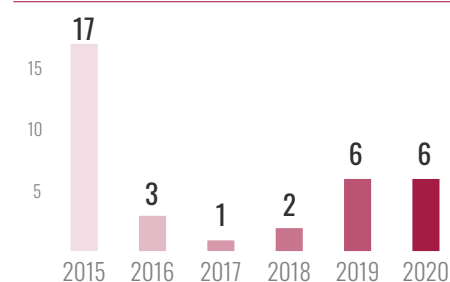
Breakdown by country of origin



ASYLUM APPLICATIONS



REFUGEE/MIGRANT FATALITIES



The latest version of the Sustainable Development Bulletin is available on UN North Macedonia website. For additional information, please contact rco-northmacedonia@un.org.

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SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

The United Nations is marking its 75th anniversary at a time of great challenge, the worst global health crisis in its history. Through the largest global discussion, we aim to define global priorities and the way forward. HAVE YOUR SAY AND JOIN THE CONVERSATION. TAKE THE SURVEY!

MACEDONIAN ALBANIAN ROMANI ENGLISH