EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO COVID-19
in Mixed Migration Context in Bosnia and Herzegovina

SITUATION REPORT #42 / 04 January 2021
Reporting Period: 28/12/2020 – 03/01/2021
http://drc.ba/covid19_resources

<table>
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<tr>
<th>WEEKLY UPDATES:</th>
<th>HIGHLIGHTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 PoCs exhibiting symptoms and isolated in reception facilities</td>
<td>• 112,828 cases of COVID-19 confirmed in BiH, 4,179 deaths and 78,882 recovered patients.¹</td>
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<td>382 PoCs screened in reception facilities</td>
<td>• 15 PoCs exhibiting COVID-19-like symptoms monitored by PHC and DRC medical teams in TRCs: 6 in TRC Miral and 9 in TRC Blazuj.</td>
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<td>0 new PoCs confirmed positive for COVID-19</td>
<td>• 13 new PoCs exhibiting COVID-19-like symptoms referred to symptomatic isolation in reception centers: 5 in TRC Miral and 8 in TRC Blazuj.</td>
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<td>CUMULATIVE:</td>
<td>• 73 PoCs referred to preventive isolation in reception facilities.</td>
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<td>33 PoCs positive for COVID-19</td>
<td>• 382 PoCs screened for COVID-19 symptoms: all new arrivals to temporary reception facilities in BiH during the reporting week.</td>
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<td>61,136 COVID-19 screenings in reception facilities</td>
<td>• 91 PoCs monitored in preventive isolation by DRC Medical Officers (28 in TRC Miral, 36 in Sedra and 27 in Borici).</td>
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<td>373 PoCs tested for COVID-19</td>
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KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES
• The decisions taken by the authorities, leaving PoCs stranded in the Lipa site, are creating serious risks of a COVID-19 outbreak. Keeping groups of 50+ persons in a closed space for over 24 hours, without establishing any form of IPC measures, could potentially be devastating in days to come if an outbreak occurs. It is currently impossible to establish any measures for prevention of COVID-19 in Lipa. The complete lack of running water, hygienic items, sanitary facilities, healthcare and other services is increasing the chances of a COVID-19 outbreak among this population. Additionally, many different actors are moving through the site, using Lipa as a common point of entry into BiH.

¹ Official statistics for Federation of BiH, Republika Srpska and Brcko District
including reporters and state officials, not always compliant with publicly recommended measures, increasing the chances of spreading the disease.

- **DRC** keeps monitoring and observing PoCs with symptoms related to COVID-19 daily, as well as referring to healthcare if their medical condition deteriorates.

- A total of 48 PoCs were discharged from preventive isolation in all TRCs in BiH, and 21 PoCs from symptomatic isolation, on expiry of the isolation and monitoring period. In the same period, **6 PoCs left preventive and 5 PoC left symptomatic isolation on their own.**

**Outreach response:**

- PoCs in out-of-site locations are provided with medical assistance by DRC and RC teams visiting the sites, delivering First Aid and performing medical screening of PoCs for COVID-19 symptoms.

- Regarding the medical needs in Lipa site, DRC Teams observed PoCs with skin diseases due to lack of water and sanitary facilities, as well harsh weather
conditions, including scabies, body lice and skin infections. There are a large number of reported symptoms of respiratory infections, that could potentially be related to COVID-19. Due to weather conditions and lack of food and water, there are reports of hypothermia cases, dehydration and fatigue due to malnourishment.

OPERATIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

- COVID-19 Response in TRCs in BiH:
  - With the closure of ETC Lipa, capacities for preventive and symptomatic isolation in TRCs in BiH decreased. At the moment, a total of 123 beds in TRCs in USC are available for preventive isolation and a total of 202 beds for POCs with COVID-19 symptoms.

  ![Overview of designated isolation areas](image)

  - In line with COVID-19 testing procedures for the local population, POCs exhibiting mild or moderate symptoms are not tested, but frequently monitored in isolation areas by both PHC and DRC medical staff. MoH and PHIs are informed on daily basis on the conditions of these patients. Security of isolation areas needs to be improved in order to establish better compliance with COVID-19 preventive measures, since several beneficiaries left isolation during night hours.

- Coordination with authorities and health actors:
  - Following the concerns expressed by DRC regarding the public health risk inside the Lipa site after its closure, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Policy has requested the Public Health Institute of USC to conduct an assessment of the site. Following a field visit to Lipa site, the PHI Una-Sana Canton issued a report, stating that the location has no basic sanitary-technical and hygienic conditions, making public health monitoring impossible and listing a number of significant risks for human life (e.g. occurrence
and spread of infectious diseases, contagious intestinal diseases, occurrence of hypothermia and frostbite, physical injuries and possible outbreak of COVID-19).

- In line with these findings, delivery of health care services under these conditions is considered unethical, inappropriate and ineffective. DRC has therefore maintained a limited intervention presence in the vicinity of Lipa, with an alert medical field team which has facilitated referrals of medical emergencies to health care institutions in Bihac, USC.

- **Measures related to humanitarian staff:**
  - Humanitarian staff working in the reception centers should continuously self-monitor². In case humanitarian staff have been in contact with persons confirmed positive for COVID-19, they should inform their health provider and follow the suggested measures. Staff exhibiting COVID-19 like symptoms, including fever, should suspend their presence from the reception centers until fully recovered. Additionally, information should be shared with DRC medical teams, to ensure contact tracing and mitigating the risk of spread of COVID-19 infection.

### MEASURES ANNOUNCED BY BIH AUTHORITIES

The Federal Ministry of Health issued a press release today, confirming all previous orders are still in place, following the Decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina related to the Order of the Crisis Staff of the Federal Ministry of Health which restricts movement in the Federation of BiH from 11 pm to 5 am, as well as mandatory wearing of protective masks.


### MEDIA REPORTING

1. **Bosnia reports 183 new coronavirus cases and 48 fatalities**

Bosnian health officials reported 183 new Covid-19 cases on Monday, along with 48 virus-related fatalities.


2. **Colpa warns that Bosnia may remain in some sort of COVID-19 Ghetto**

Member of the House of Representatives of Parliament of Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina Nihad Colpa believes that Bosnia and Herzegovina has lost pace with time regarding vaccination against coronavirus.

“And while the countries we border have started immunizing the population, the citizens of BiH are doomed to wait. I am afraid that we will not see the vaccine for a long time, and if we see it, it will probably be some gift

² The Federal Institute for Public Health has made available the online self-assessment test on COVID-19, available at [https://www.zzjzfbih.ba/covid-19/](https://www.zzjzfbih.ba/covid-19/)
from friendly countries and in very small quantities, which will not help us bring the virus under control even in 2021,” warns Colpa.

Colpa also warns that BiH may remain in some sort of COVID-19 ghetto.

“Or to simplify, the visa regime will come back, because some countries and carriers have announced that a vaccination certificate will be needed for transportation and entry into the countries,” Colpa points out.

According to Colpa, the incompetence of the current government is best reflected in the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina is becoming a collection center for migrants and unvaccinated persons.

Colpa warns that Bosnia may remain in some sort of COVID-19 Ghetto - Sarajevo Times

3. Expert: If vaccine arrives in April, herd immunity at end of 2021 in Bosnia

While the countries across Europe are starting the mass vaccination against Covid-19, the vaccination rollout in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still uncertain. The first batch of vaccines through COVAX mechanism is expected in the first quarter of 2021, and it should cover 3% of the overall population. Lagging behind other countries is unacceptable, immunologist Jasenko Karamehic commented.

“The vaccine cannot give effects the same day. It is necessary to distribute it, to deliver it, to create immunoglobulins. It is not a medicine showing effects in two hours,” Karamhelic told N1.

According to him, it will take months before the herd immunity is created i.e. before 60-70 percent of the population is immunized.

Expert: If vaccine arrives in April, herd immunity at end of 2021 in Bosnia | N1 BA (n1info.com)

4. EU approves €70 mn to fund access to Covid-19 vaccines in Western Balkans

The European Commission adopted on Monday a €70 million worth package under the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA II) to help fund the access of Western Balkans partners to COVID-19 vaccines procured by the EU Member States, the EU’s office in Sarajevo confirmed.

EU approves €70 mn to fund access to Covid-19 vaccines in Western Balkans | N1 BA (n1info.com)

5. BiH has no official information on EU’s €70 million aid for vaccines to Balkans

Bosnia’s Civil Affairs Ministry has no information regarding European Commission’s €70 million aid for the procurement of coronavirus vaccine for the Western Balkans, the Ministry told N1 on Tuesday, adding that they have ordered 82,000 doses via COVAX.

BiH has no official information on EU’s €70 million aid for vaccines to Balkans | N1 BA (n1info.com)

6. Council of Ministers of BiH decides on Distribution of Two Million BAM for Vaccines

The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina passed the Decision on the distribution of 10 million BAM from the budget of BiH institutions intended for repairing the economic damages caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which will be directed to the health sector in BiH. The funds will be allocated to the entities and the
Brčko District of BiH, namely to the Federation of BiH with 10 cantons 61%, the Republika Srpska 37% and the Brčko District BiH 2%.

Council of Ministers of BiH decides on Distribution of Two Million BAM for Vaccines - Sarajevo Times

7. BiH official: Bosnia should start talks with coronavirus vaccine producers

Bosnia and Herzegovina should immediately begin direct negotiations with coronavirus vaccine producers and provide it to the most vulnerable categories of the society because the COVAX instrument will not provide the wanted results, Denis Zvizdic, Deputy Chairman of Bosnia’s House of Representatives said Wednesday.

BiH official: Bosnia should start talks with coronavirus vaccine producers | N1 BA (n1info.com)

8. New Doctors to be employed in Canton Sarajevo

The Government of the Sarajevo Canton gave its consent to the Public Institution Health Center of the Sarajevo Canton for the employment of 16 medical doctors for an indefinite period of time.

New Doctors to be employed in Canton Sarajevo - Sarajevo Times

9. Migrants at Lipa camp in Bosnia: Help us, we are freezing here (PHOTO)

It is now raining at camp Lipa in northwestern Bosnia and hundreds of migrants who have been stranded there for days have lit a fire to warm up, while some refuse to enter the military tents the Bosnian Armed Forces set up, demanding to be relocated since the camp does not provide adequate shelter from the winter weather conditions.

The migrants are holding up signs saying “Help us, we are freezing.” They bathe outdoors, pouring water from a jug.

The Danish Refugee Council and the SOS in the nearby town of Bihac have started providing health care to the migrants who have spent several nights outdoors.

Although Bosnia’s Council of Ministers has decided to relocate the migrants to the former Bira migrant reception centre in Bihac, local authorities refuse to reopen it due to opposition from the local population.

Migrants at Lipa camp in Bosnia: Help us, we are freezing here (PHOTO) - N1 (n1info.com)

10. Pandemic worsens mental suffering for young migrants

The COVID-19 pandemic has had detrimental effects on the mental health of migrant youths, researchers say. In a new report, they point in particular to their increased isolation as virus restrictions have led to the shutdown of many points of essential human contact.

Pandemic worsens mental suffering for young migrants - InfoMigrants
Stay informed – find the latest information from WHO or related sources:
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
https://www.epi-win.com/

We thank you for your responsible behavior in the interest of your own health, but also in the
interest of the health of all the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.