



AFEW International's
**COVID-19 situation report in the six countries of
the Eastern Partnership**

Prepared for the COVID-19 Solidarity Programme



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Introduction

In the framework of the EU COVID-19 Solidarity Programme for Eastern Partnership, *AFEW International*, People in Need (PIN) and Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) joined forces to propose a set of interventions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute towards longer-term socio-economic resilience of vulnerable groups.

One of the activities in this project is the collection of information on the epidemiology of COVID-19, the measures taken by local governments to contain the epidemic and information on access to health services. This report doesn't give conclusions or recommendations for next steps; the report functions as an information resource as support for the development of (new) interventions.

This report gives an overview of the period 1 October – 31 December 2020, the second quarter of the implementation period of the project. Such a report will be produced for every quarter of the project duration.

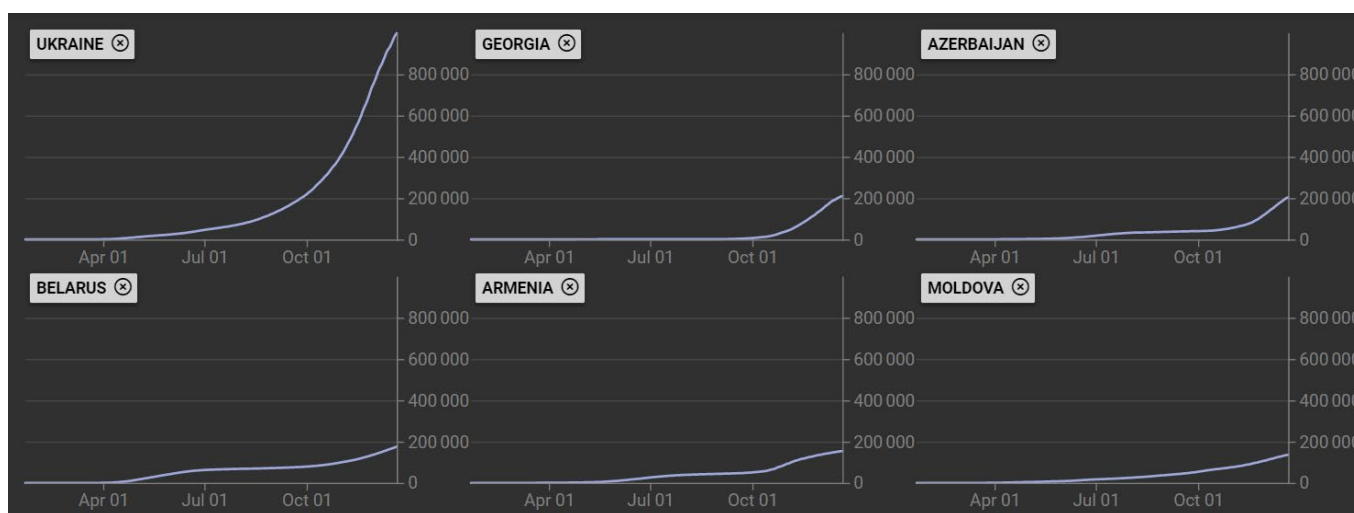
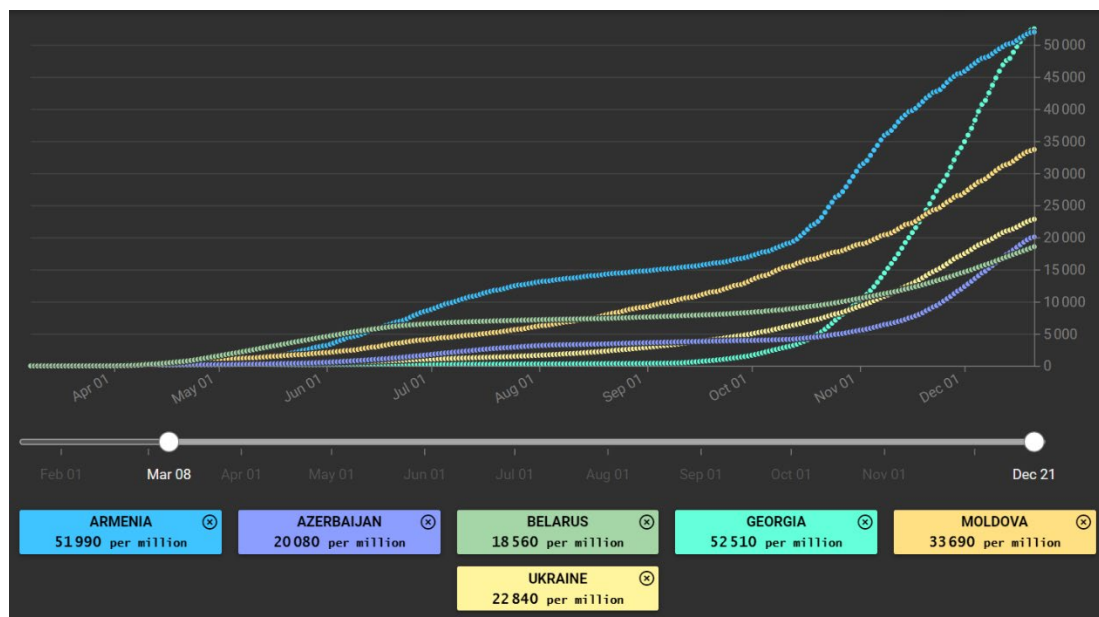
For this report the following sources are used:

- WHO Health System Response Monitor (HSRM);
- Official sources on the coronavirus situation in the countries;
- Reports on the COVID-19 situation prepared by the UNICEF, UN, OECD, International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR);
- Global news agencies;
- Local independent media.

Regional overview

Regional highlight: All countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, except Turkmenistan, have officially reported COVID-19 cases. Armenia, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia are the most affected relative to their population size. Ukraine became officially the most affected country in absolute numbers (making up 26.3 percent of reported cases in Eastern Europe and Central Asia).¹

Graph 1,2. Total confirmed COVID-19 cases per population ratio since the start of the active phase of the pandemic (April 1, 2020) in the countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) as of 22.12.2020²



¹ The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region COVID-19 Situation Report No. 7 (Reporting Period: 1 - 31 October 2020). UNFPA, 2020. [cited 2020 December 22]. Available from: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/EECARO_COVID-19_UNFPA_Sitrep9_October.pdf.

² Sciences Po Medialab Coronavirus Country Comparator. <https://booghetta.github.io/coronavirus-countries/> accessed 22-12-2020. COVID-19 Solidarity Programme, COVID-19 situation report in the six countries of the Eastern Partnership

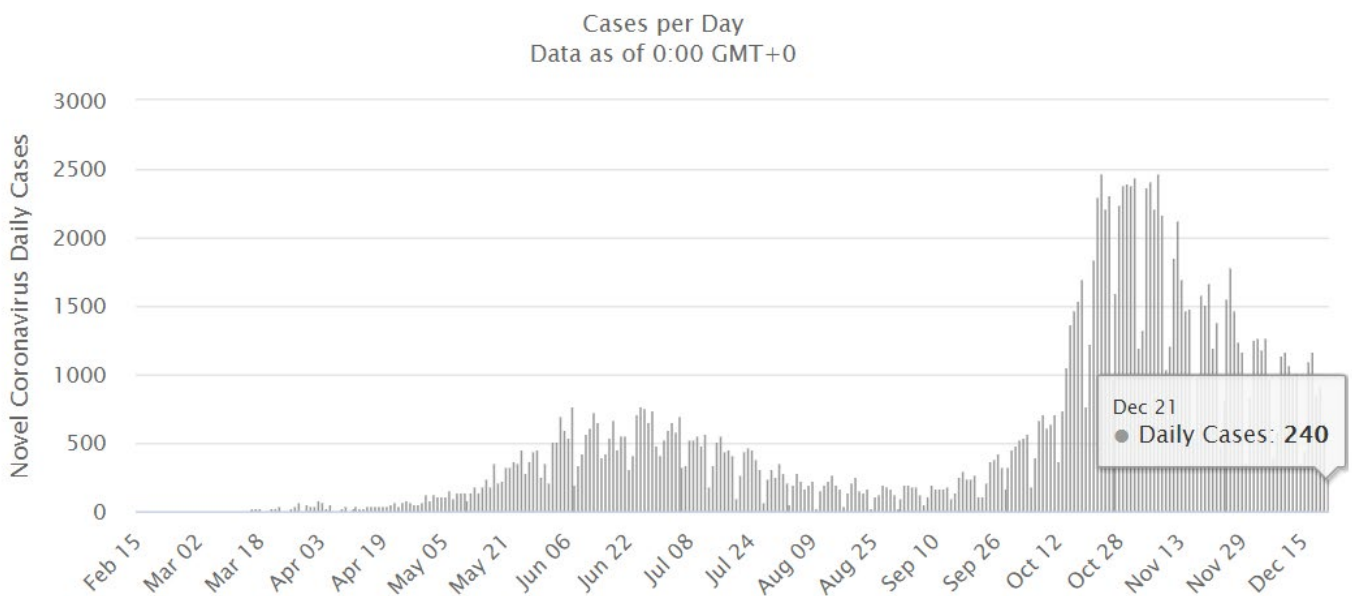
Situation report Armenia

as of 22.12.2020



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
154,602	134,586	2,673

Graph 3. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in Armenia³



Cases of COVID-19

— In Armenia, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 infections [has been gradually decreasing](#), but the situation remains alarming.

— The effective reproduction rate [stands at](#) 0.83. The weekly number of new cases registered a -0.047 decrease last week.

Measures to contain the epidemic

— The state of emergency in Armenia has ended on September 11. Now the quarantine regime [has been introduced](#), which will last until January 11, 2021. Wearing a mask remains obligatory.

— On 16 October, the Armenian government once again advised people to work from home if at all possible – particularly people with pre-existing conditions. There are concerns that escalating conflict and the introduction of martial law with a second spike in COVID-19 cases could overload the health facilities and health workers. The

³ Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/armenia/> accessed 22-12-2020.

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Armenian authorities recommended a “conscious, voluntary lockdown” by refraining from nearly all social activities, from eating in restaurants to holding birthday parties to allowing children to play outside.⁴

Education

- Schools in Armenia resumed in-person learning from December 7. Clinically vulnerable and 65+ employees of schools can work remotely. At-risk children will continue learning remotely.
- If a student contracts the virus, then the Ministry of Health will be notified and the student’s whole class will be quarantined for 14 days. The Armenian government will also be providing schools with extra face masks and hand sanitiser.

Economy

- On December 23, the European Union (EU) informed the Government of Armenia about the disbursement of additional €24 million in grants to support Armenia’s fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

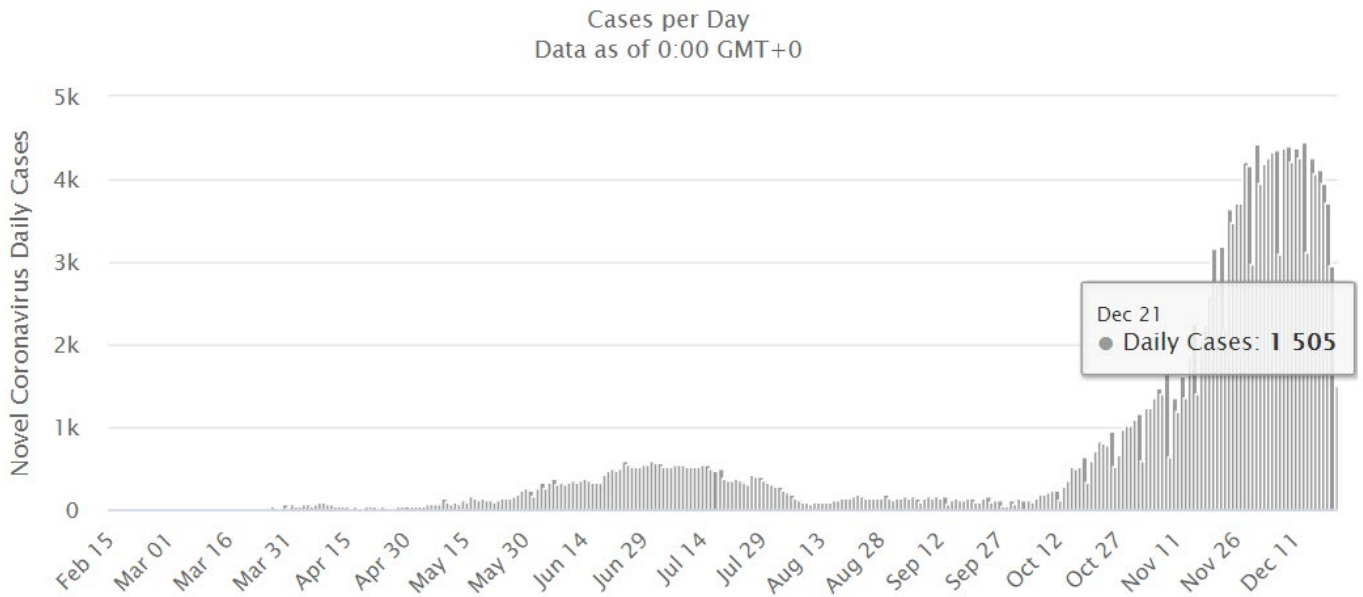
⁴ WHO Health System Response Monitor (HSRM). Armenia Country Page. HSRM, 2020. [cited 2020 December 22]. Available from: <https://www.covid19healthsystem.org/countries/armenia/livinghit.aspx?Section=1.2%20Physical%20distancing&Type=Section>.

Situation report Azerbaijan

as of 22.12.2020



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
203,593	142,807	2,253



Graph 4. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in Azerbaijan⁵

Cases of COVID-19

- As of December 22, the daily number of new coronavirus cases [has been on the rise](#) in recent weeks.
- As of December 22, the overall number of coronavirus cases in Azerbaijan [has reached](#) 191,460, or 1.9% of the country's population of ten million. The effective reproduction number (Rt), or the average number of people who become infected by an infectious person, is 0.9.

Measures to contain the epidemic

- Azerbaijan [has extended](#) the Strict Quarantine Regime until January 31 and toughened movement restrictions amid an increasing number of infections in the country.
- The Strict Quarantine Regime was introduced in the cities of Shaki and Lankaran, as well as in the districts of Gakh, Zagatala, Bilasuvar, Jalilabad, Masalli, Ismayilli, Guba, and Khachmaz. According to the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 7 December, 2020: - The duration of the special quarantine regime in the country shall be extended until 06:00 on 31 January 2021; - A tightening of the special quarantine regime shall be applied throughout the country from 00:00 on 14 December 2020 to 00:00 on 18 January 2021; - Due to the tightening

⁵ Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/azerbaijan> accessed 22-12-2020.

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of the special quarantine regime throughout the country from 00:00 on 14 December 2020 to 00:00 on 18 January 2021, the operation of most work and service sectors shall be suspended. All commercial and public catering establishments, including restaurants, cafes and tea houses, shall only be allowed to provide delivery services to customers or provide services online; - From 00:00 on 14 December 2020 to 00:00 on 18 January 2021, entry and exit to and from the cities of Baku, Sumgayit, Ganja, Mingachevir and Shirvan, Absheron District, as well as Lankaran, Masalli, Jalilabad, Sheki, Zagatala, Guba, Khachmaz, Yevlakh, Barda, Bilasuvar and Ismayilli district centres (except for villages and settlements), shall be suspended except for operational and special purpose vehicles, as well as trucks and vehicles of the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action; - From 00:00 on 14 December 2020 to 00:00 on 18 January 2021, traffic restrictions shall be applied in the cities of Baku, Sumgayit, Ganja, Mingachevir and Shirvan, Absheron district, as well as Lankaran, Masalli, Jalilabad, Sheki, Zagatala, Guba, Khachmaz, Yevlakh, Barda, Bilasuvar and Ismayilli district centres (except for villages and settlements).⁶

Education

— From 2 November, with the worsening epidemiological situation, distance education started in all the educational institutions. Online learning has been extended to 30 December in all educational establishments.⁷

Health services

— As of 15 December, over 1.98 million tests have been conducted and daily testing capacity is 5000-15000. The Government has a strategy to expand testing capacities and a roll-out plan for additional laboratories to be added to the network when needed. Laboratories have started operating in Ganja and Nakhchivan, while additional laboratories have been opened in Shaki and Sumgait. TABIB has declined to use rapid tests to detect COVID-19 in Azerbaijan because of their low accuracy.⁸

Economy

— Azerbaijan's economy was strongly affected by the COVID-19 crisis, bringing the unemployment rate to 6.5 percent (in comparison with 4.8 percent in 2019).

— With the daily economic losses reaching between 120 -150 million manat (\$71 - 88 million USD), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) expects that Azerbaijan's gross domestic product (GDP) will shrink by 5% in 2020.

⁶ WHO Health System Response Monitor (HSRM). Armenia Country Page. HSRM, 2020. [cited 2020 December 22]. Available from: file:///C:/Users/irina_orlova/Downloads/PolicyResponses_Azerbaijan.pdf.

⁷ Ibid., p.6.

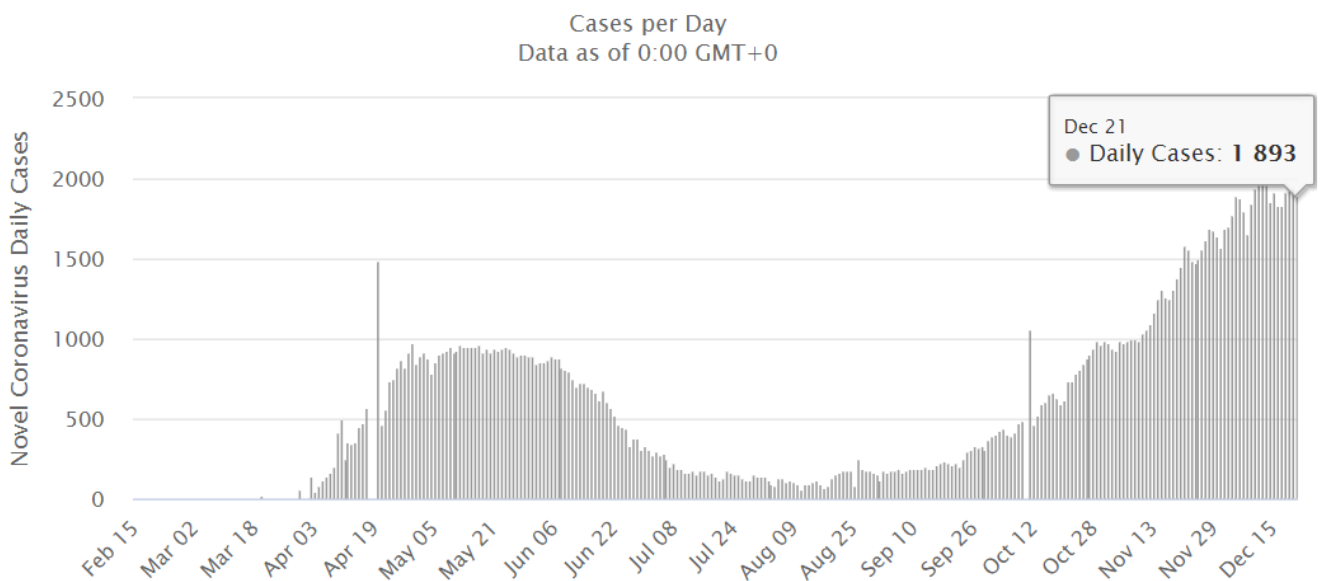
⁸ Ibid., p.8.

Situation report Belarus

as of 22.12.2020



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
175,416	152,930	1,333



Graph 5. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in Belarus⁹

Cases of COVID-19

— According to an infectious disease specialist from Belarus who gave [an interview](#) to Deutsche Welle: “Today we see a higher incidence of coronavirus infection than in the first wave of the pandemic and a larger percentage of severe patients.”

Measures to contain the epidemic

— Since December 21, Belarusian land borders are closed. This is stated in the [Decree of the Council of Ministers](#) of December 7. As stated in the document, it was decided "to temporarily suspend the crossing of the state border of the Republic of Belarus for exit by citizens, as well as foreigners who have a permanent or temporary residence permit."

— According to the decree, citizens who have a residence permit or an employment contract in another country, as well as those who want to leave the country for valid reasons: due to a serious illness or death of a close relative or spouse abroad, will be able to leave Belarus to obtain medical care or [for education](#).

— Wearing protection mask is obligatory in all public spaces.

⁹ Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/belarus> accessed 22-12-2020.

Health services

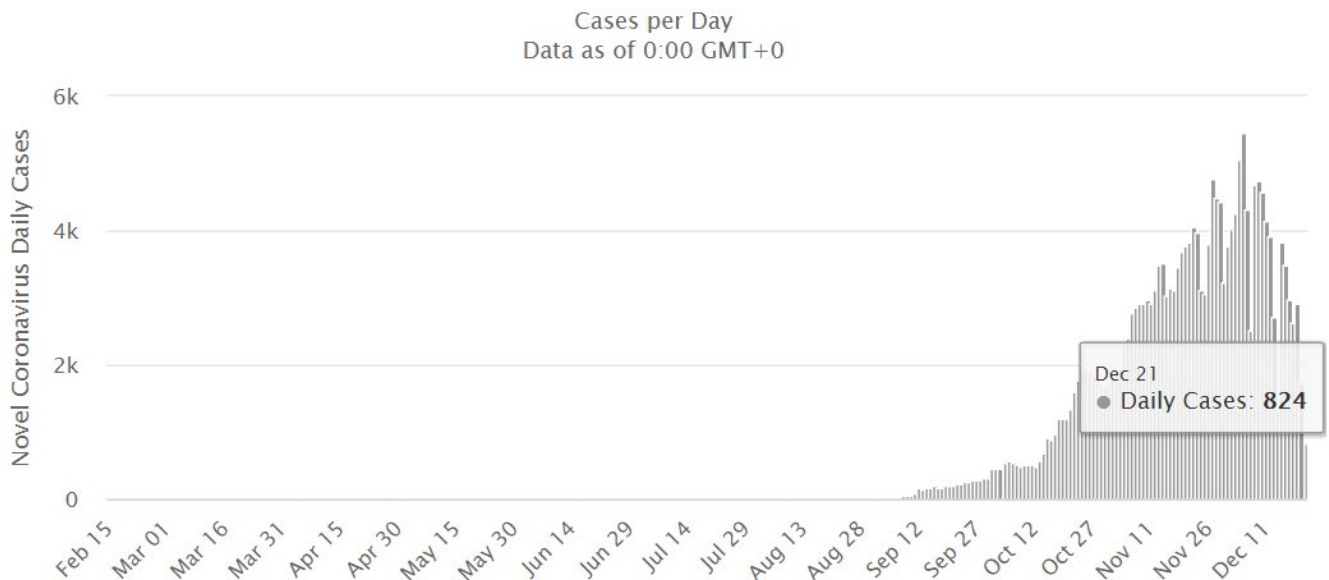
- Belarus has become [the first foreign country](#) to register Russia's "Sputnik V" coronavirus vaccine, announced the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) on Monday, December 21.
- Plans are in place to vaccinate 1.2 million Belarusians against COVID-19 by the end of the next spring, Belarus' Healthcare Minister Dmitry Pinevich [told the media](#) following a meeting hosted by the head of state to discuss antiviral vaccines and localization of production of foreign vaccines in Belarus on December 22. Mass vaccination against coronavirus will begin in Belarus in January 2021.

Situation report Georgia

as of 22.12.2020



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
212,526	188,408	2,182



Graph 6. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in Georgia¹⁰

Cases of COVID-19

— As of December 20, a total of 1,731 new cases of coronavirus [have been reported](#) over the last 24 hours in Georgia after conducting 9,812 tests. Meanwhile, 4,599 individuals have recovered, outnumbering the new cases. Out of the 1,731 new cases, 774 were reported in Tbilisi.

— On December 17, Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia [stated](#) that for the first time in the past several months the country reported less than 3,000 daily infections from more than 17,000 daily tests. “The restrictions which were imposed by the government at the end of November have helped us to slow the spread of coronavirus. We have managed to slow the rate of new infections which gives us a reason for cautious optimism,” Gakharia stated. He said that the ‘achievement should be preserved’ and urged people to refrain from gatherings for New Year and Christmas.

Measures to contain the epidemic

— On November 26 the government of Georgia [has imposed](#) restrictions to curb the spread of the coronavirus in the country.

— The restrictions in effect between November 28 and January 31 are [as follows](#):

- An effective curfew is in force between the hours of 21:00 and 05:00. The restriction will be temporarily lifted on December 31 and January 6 (for New Year and Christmas).

¹⁰ Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/georgia> accessed 22-12-2020.

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- Restaurants and other food facilities are fully moved to takeaway services which include takeaway, delivery and drive.
- Fitness clubs, swimming pools are closed.
- Sports, arts and cultural activities are not allowed.
- Regular intercity transport is not available.

The full list of restrictions can be found [here](#).

Health services

— Since December 2, the Georgian government [has introduced](#) large scale testing allowing 20,000 daily coronavirus tests around the country to reveal new infections and curb the spread of the virus in a timely fashion. This will continue until February 1, 2021. More than 1,207,000 individuals have been tested for coronavirus in Georgia so far.

Education

— Schools, vocational schools and higher education institutions (except medical education programs) [are fully switched to online studies](#) until January 31, 2021.

— Private and public kindergartens [are closed](#) until January 31, 2021.

Economy

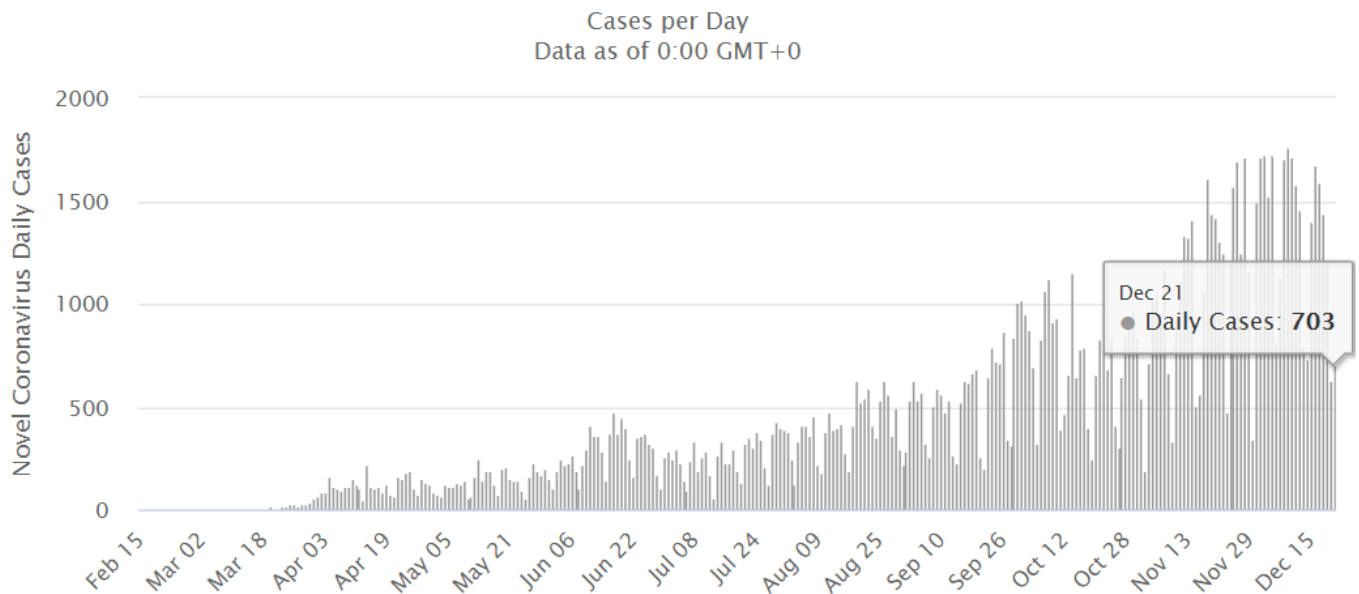
— In the 3rd quarter of 2020, because of the strict coronavirus measures implemented in the country, Georgia's GDP [shrank](#) 5.6%.

Situation report Republic of Moldova

as of 22.12.2020



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
135,910	120,015	2,777



Graph 7. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in the Republic of Moldova¹¹

Cases of COVID-19

— The number of new coronavirus cases continued to grow over the past week, with 1,459 cases reported on Saturday (12/12) and Sunday (13/12). The average number of daily cases over a seven-day period now stands at 1,450, which is about 115 cases more compared to the same figure last week. The percentage of positive tests has averaged 40% over the same period.¹²

— The proportion of active cases in the total number of registered cases stands at 11.9%. The number of patients with coronavirus treated in hospitals is 3,786, out of which 290 are in very serious condition.¹³

— The weekly number of new cases registered an 8.6% increase last week, reaching 10,153. The contagion rate (R0) decreased further from 1.05 to 1.04.¹⁴

¹¹ Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/moldova> accessed 22-12-2020.

¹² United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Moldova: Coronavirus Disease - COVID 19 - Situation Report No. 42 (14 December 2020). OCHA, 2020. [cited 2020 December 22]. Available from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/moldova/moldova-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-situation-report-no-42-14-december-2020>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

— In terms of geographical distribution, Chisinau, with 42% of all confirmed cases, remains the most affected area if the number of cases is considered. With 12% of all confirmed cases, the Transnistria region follows in the list of most affected areas.¹⁵

Measures to contain the epidemic

— On November 27, the National Extraordinary Public Health Commission (NEPHC) repeatedly declared the state of Public Health Emergency in the Republic of Moldova. According to the decision no. 35 of November 27, new preventive measures were approved for the period November 30, 2020 – January 15, 2021.

— With the number of cases continuously growing, authorities decided to close down night clubs, activities that imply the presence of spectators in theatres, cinemas, concert halls, etc. Also, it is prohibited to serve customers in public catering units (restaurants, bars, canteens, cafes) between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. starting November 30.

— Groups of a maximum of 3 people are allowed in open public places like forests, parks, alleys, beaches, etc. Elderly persons over 63 years can't go in public spaces without strict necessity.

— The organisation of single mass meetings, group meetings with the participation of fewer than 50 people is allowed. But these meetings may not be held next to public institutions, schools, hospitals or other places at high risk of infection. Festive events are still allowed to be held in public catering units, with the participation of fewer than 50 people, in compliance with public health measures.

Education

— As of 20 December, a total of 20 schools in the country moved to remote learning. The number of students who tested positive for COVID-19 is 489 people, 13 615 are self-isolated.

Health services

— The share of health care workers in the total number of cases remained at around 9%. Over 11,400 doctors, nurses, medical assistants and other staff from the health care sector have been infected with the virus since the beginning of the outbreak.¹⁶

Economy

— COVID-19 has drastically deteriorated the outlook for the Moldovan economy with a significant recession expected in 2020. At the same time, weaker economic growth in the EU combined with the effects of the lockdown is expected to lead to significant economic contraction of Moldova's GDP in 2020.

— Beyond 2020, the high uncertainty on the duration of the pandemic and its economic and social ramifications could further constrain firms, workers and households, hampering the recovery. If downside risks materialize, reduced fiscal space may limit the capacity for further countercyclical measures.

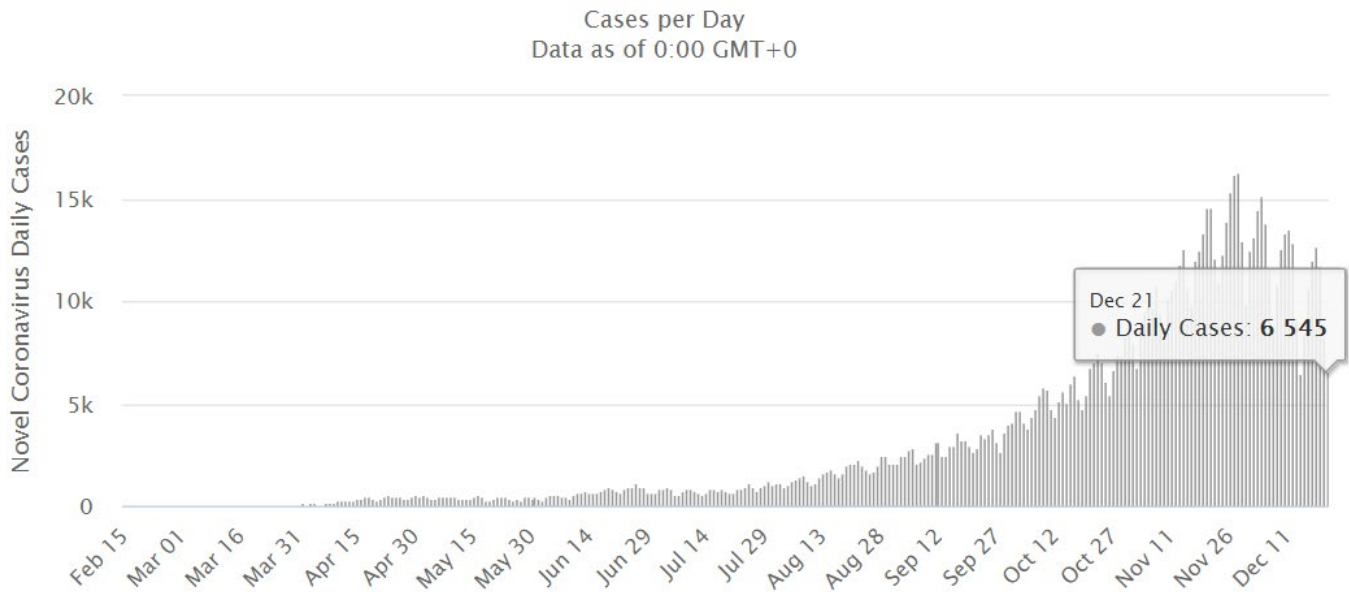
¹⁵ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Moldova: Coronavirus Disease - COVID 19 - Situation Report No. 42 (14 December 2020). OCHA, 2020. [cited 2020 December 22]. Available from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/moldova/moldova-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-situation-report-no-42-14-december-2020>.

Situation report Ukraine

as of 22.12.2020



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
979,506	600,288	16,897



Graph 8. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in Ukraine¹⁷

Cases of COVID-19

— The highest incidence rate of COVID-19 in Ukraine was recorded in Kyiv city, Cherkasy, Zaporizhzhia, Chernihiv, Kyiv, Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Volyn regions, according to data provided by the Health Ministry on December 22.

— In particular, the incidence rate of COVID-19 in the past 14 days in Kyiv city amounted to 656.7 per 100,000 people, in Cherkasy region – 631.9, and in Zaporizhzhia region – 629.1. The high incidence rate of COVID-19 in the past 14 days was also recorded in Chernihiv region (584), Kyiv region (531.3), Odesa region (532.9), Mykolaiv region (509.2), and Volyn region (452.6).

— An average incidence rate across Ukraine is 385.3 per 100,000 people.

— As of December 22, more than 2,000 COVID-19 reinfections have been recorded in Ukraine, the Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine reported.

Measures to contain the epidemic

— The Cabinet of Ministers extended the coronavirus quarantine restrictions in Ukraine until February 28, 2021. The relevant resolution was adopted at the Cabinet’s meeting on December 9.

¹⁷ Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/ukraine> accessed 22-12-2020.

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— As reported, strict quarantine measures were imposed for two months in Ukraine in mid-March. The first stage of easing quarantine restrictions began on May 11. Subsequently, the Cabinet of Ministers introduced adaptive quarantine in Ukraine, i.e. restrictive measures were gradually eased depending on the epidemiological situation in each region.

— On November 11, the Government approved the waiver of adaptive quarantine, deciding to impose nationwide quarantine with restrictions that had been applied at the orange level of COVID-19 prevalence.

— The Government also introduced a weekend quarantine that lasted until November 30.

— On Wednesday, December 9, the Cabinet of Ministers decided to strengthen quarantine measures in Ukraine. They will be in effect on January 8-24.

Health services

— The bed occupancy rate at COVID-19 designated hospitals across the country in the past five days amounted to 41.9% as of December 21. In Kyiv city, this figure amounted to 50.5%. The high level of bed occupancy rate was recorded in the Mykolaiv region (70.1%) and Odesa region (52.9%).

Education

— As of December 22, the acting Minister of Education and Science Serhiy Shkarlet urged schools to transfer students to distance learning for two weeks due to an increase in the number of cases of coronavirus infection in Ukraine.

— Currently, schools can operate both in-person and in a mixed learning format, and some classes are being transferred to a distance mode.

Economy

— The World Bank has approved a new loan for Ukraine intended to help the country hit hard by the coronavirus outbreak provide support for low-income families. The \$300 million loan, which was approved late on December 11, comes as the international financial institution has projected that the poverty level in Ukraine could reach 23 percent by the end of the year.

Interesting reads

- UNDP Moldova: Social and Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Vulnerable Groups and Economic Sectors in the Republic of Moldova, Impact Assessment Report (25 November 2020), [download](#).
- Radio Free Liberty: Ukrainian Entrepreneurs Protest Coronavirus Restrictions [watch](#).
- UN Human Rights Council report: Impact of COVID-19 on Human Rights in Ukraine (18 December 2020), report [download](#).
- Open Democracy: Doctors becoming activists: a prescription for solidarity in Belarus and Russia [read](#).
- Deutsche Welle: an infectious disease specialist about COVID-19 in Belarus, government statistics and doctors' protests [read](#) (in Russian).