



NORTH MACEDONIA

Serbia Donates Thousands Of Doses Of COVID-19 Vaccine To North Macedonia

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By RFE/RL's Balkan Service

Serbia has donated 4,680 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to neighboring North Macedonia, which has struggled to secure any vaccine supplies for its population of 2.1 million.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and North Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev met on February 14 at the Tabanovce border crossing for a ceremonial handover of one of the boxes containing doses of the shot.

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Serbia is donating enough doses to fully inoculate 2,340 people with the two-dose regime.

Calling the gift a "precious expression of friendship," Zaev said that it will be used "to vaccinate all medical staff working in COVID centers."

"A friend in need is a friend indeed," Vucic said.

"We care about nothing else but our friendship to prosper, for us to advance economic development, and for us to be able to live not only as best neighbors, but also as best friends," the Serbian president added.

Serbia, a country of 7 million, has so far vaccinated some 635,000 people, mainly with the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine, the Russian Sputnik V dose, and to a lesser extent, the Pfizer-BioNTech shots.

North Macedonia is hoping to receive 840,000 vaccine doses in February under a scheme led by the World Health Organization to help poorer countries immunize their populations. But manufacturing delays in recent weeks have held up those plans -- as well as similar plans for Ukraine and Moldova.

Last week, the Macedonian authorities signed an agreement to receive 200,000 doses of the Chinese SinoPharm vaccine. They hope to launch their vaccination program later in February.

Another 800,000 vaccines are expected to arrive in the country later in 2021 via the EU. But officials in Skopje have also asked neighbors Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia for assistance, along with Poland and Hungary.

With reporting by Reuters and AP

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