

OSCE Mission to Serbia: UK statement

Thank you Mr Chair – The UK welcomes Ambassador Orizio to the Permanent Council. We thank you for the comprehensive Report on the Mission's activities during the reporting period.

I would like to start by congratulating the Mission and its staff for their continued assistance to Serbia on its reform path, and welcoming their strong focus on media freedom and anti-corruption. The Mission's work has also been commendable in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, during which the Mission has deftly adapted its programme in order to support Serbia. We welcome the many activities that have enabled immediate support for the most vulnerable groups in Serbia, and for the important monitoring of the impact of the Covid-19 State of Emergency on democracy, human rights, and media freedom.

We welcome the participation of the OSCE and ODIHR in working groups established by the Government of Serbia to improve electoral conditions. However, another immediate challenge of the ongoing pandemic will be the elections scheduled for 21st June. We recognise the importance of independent election observation to the continued democratic development of all participating States, including through the recommendations that form part of the final report. We strongly support election-related activity by ODIHR for the upcoming election, but recognise the practical challenges this will present.

Mr Chair – I would like to comment on a few of the highlights in the Report.

Firstly – on media freedom, the UK welcomes the Government's adoption of the Media Strategy in January this year, the implementation of which, as the report notes, will be crucial in ensuring a healthier media environment. The Mission's focus on safety of journalists is vital, and we are encouraged by the percentage decrease in cases where the perpetrators of crimes against journalists remained unknown, following the Mission's joint training sessions with police, prosecutors and journalists.

Secondly – the UK also welcomes the achievements on anti-corruption, including through your expert support on prevention and repression, backed by the adoption of new pieces of legislation and strategic documents. As ever, the implementation of these laws will be crucial. Your assistance, such as with the development of risk analysis guidelines, and in partnering with the international community to enhance the capacity of the police to investigate cases of corruption, clearly demonstrates the Mission's value on the ground in support of the Government's priorities. Further work and focus in this area will be of continued importance. This approach also saw Serbia's adoption of all relevant Financial Action Task Force (FATF) measures that enabled their removal from the FATF grey list.

Thirdly – We welcome your work on gender. Ensuring gender is mainstreamed into all programmatic activities is essential to enhancing impact and delivering more sustainable results on the ground. It also contributes to

greater prosperity and more sustainable peace. In particular, we appreciate your assistance in the implementation of Serbia's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, in this the twentieth anniversary year of the Resolution.

Mr Chair – this reporting period is unique, taking in as it does the challenges of operating during a global pandemic and lockdown situation. We appreciate that the Mission has risen to this challenge, including through tangible support to vulnerable groups to lessen the compounding impact of the current situation. And we would appreciate hearing more of your plans including, for example, on the increase in the dissemination of disinformation and misinformation that we've experienced during the Covid-19 crisis and the impact on domestic violence.

Finally, but by no means least, the UK welcomes the appointment of the OSCE's former CiO, Miroslav Lajčák as EU Special Representative for the Pristina-Belgrade Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues, and the contribution he will make alongside international partners as we work together to encourage constructive dialogue, and development of positive relationships across the region. On the dialogue – We hope that a constructive way forward will soon be found.

[More than £1million funding creates jobs and helps communities](#)

Run in conjunction with the [Nuclear Decommissioning Authority \(NDA\)](#), the scheme was established to help build sustainable communities around its former nuclear power station sites across the UK, and mitigate the impact decommissioning those sites has on the surrounding communities.

During 2019/20 it has supported 113 different organisations across the UK – including creating 10 new jobs, safeguarding 30 existing ones and helping to create two new businesses.

Funding has also resulted in 4,000 training opportunities and helped with everything from providing football kits through to organising careers fairs and helping new businesses flourish.

In addition, 532 schools across the UK got help from the scheme along with 60 different STEM (science technology, engineering and maths) activities.

The long list of organisations who successfully applied for funding in the last year include Menter Môn's Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig in North Wales, to continue its rural community enterprise initiative for the next three years, and the Envision project in the South West of England who are supporting students from Brimsham Green School. In Scotland funding has been given to a small business grant scheme run by Dumfries and Galloway Council, and also to

North Ayrshire College at Kilwinning.

The scheme has also helped support the creation of new training opportunities, including one run by Dorset Wildlife Trust, in association with Dorset Council, who are offering conservation training which will help three young people take their first steps into employment.

The Magnox scheme also provided grants to gymnastics clubs and town bands; football teams and family fun days; pantomime organisations and village halls – which are a vital part of people’s lives in our communities up and down the country.

The scheme, which is run by Magnox on behalf of the NDA, used the whole of its £1.01m budget last year – supplemented by an additional £910,000 funding made directly available from the NDA.

Nigel Monckton, Magnox Socio-economic Manager said: “Although we are not directly accountable for regeneration in the areas around our sites, the scheme is an important piece of the jigsaw. Last year matched funding for the schemes we were involved with helped leverage a further £3.8 million in support of our local communities. This is equivalent to every £1 invested by the Magnox Socio-economic Scheme helping to secure another £3.80 from other sources.”

You can read a summary of the scheme for the 2019/20 year [in our report](#).

[Health and Social Care Secretary’s statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 27 May 2020](#)

[Coronavirus press conference \(27 May 2020\)](#)

Good afternoon and welcome back to Downing Street for the daily coronavirus briefing.

I am joined by Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, and by Baroness Dido Harding, the Chair of NHS Improvement and of our Test and Trace programme.

Today we formally launch the NHS Test and Trace service. This is an incredibly important milestone for the country that I know people will want to hear about.

Before I do, I’d like to update you on the latest coronavirus data:

- 3,798,490 tests have now been carried in the UK, including 117,013 tests

yesterday

- 267,240 people have tested positive, which is an increase of 2,013 cases yesterday
- of those who tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings, 37,460 people have sadly died
- and since yesterday, 412 deaths have been recorded

We mourn them and we will not forget them.

As I said yesterday, thanks to your effort and sacrifice we are past the peak. We've flattened the curve, we've protected the NHS.

And the big question that we're all working to answer is this:

Until an effective treatment or vaccine comes through, how can we get back to doing more of the things that make life worth living without risking safety or putting lives at risk?

NHS Test and Trace is a big part – not the only part – but a big part of the answer to that question.

NHS Test and Trace means we can start to replace the national lockdown with individual isolation for those who've been in contact with the virus and local action where it's necessary to respond to a flare up.

The concept is simple. First, through testing, we hunt down the virus, finding out who is infected right now.

And I use 'we' very deliberately. Because we all have our part to play. This is a national effort and we all have a role. If you have symptoms, you must isolate immediately and get yourself a test.

Yesterday, 2,013 people tested positive.

And the next step is that through contact tracing, like detectives, the NHS clinician from NHS Test and Trace and the person who's tested positive work together to identify the possible movements of the virus, where it's been and who else it might have infected.

Then we isolate those contacts who might have been infected so the virus is unable to spread. And we break the chain of transmission.

Think of it like this. The virus exists only to reproduce. That is its sole biological purpose: to make as many copies of itself as possible.

If we can thwart that purpose, we can control the virus and ultimately defeat it.

We must all follow the NHS Test and Trace instructions, because this is how we control the virus and protect the NHS and save lives.

Some people have asked why now? Why not launch this programme earlier in the course of the pandemic?

The answer is because we needed to flatten the curve.

Right at the start of this epidemic, we had a contact tracing system in place.

But, as the virus raged towards its peak, the number of infections grew so large that we needed a national lockdown. This was the only way to get it under control.

Effectively, everyone in the country was contacted and told to stay at home.

Now we've got the number of new infections each day right down, the number of contacts of those who've tested positive is small enough that we can be in touch with everyone we need to.

And, of course, testing capacity is critical to making this work.

We now have the capacity for 161,000 tests a day. And, because of that increased capacity, I can announce that we're expanding eligibility yet further.

From tomorrow, we are expanding eligibility for testing to include the under-5s so that now every single person who has symptoms of coronavirus can get a test, no matter their age.

And, what's more, to make NHS Test and Trace as effective as possible, it is very important that everyone with symptoms must isolate immediately and go and get a test.

Now, I want to thank and pay tribute to everyone involved in making this big project happen.

Dido Harding who has led the work, the technicians in the labs making mass-testing a reality, the contact tracers manning the phones, the healthcare staff providing expert advice and the companies who've helped us put it together at record scale and pace.

And what really matters is this. To protect your friends and your family, testing and tracing must become a new way of life.

This is being launched today in England.

Northern Ireland already has a system in place and my colleagues in the Scottish and Welsh governments are working to bring in a system as soon as they can. All 4 nations have been working together to make sure we have systems that are co-ordinated across the whole country.

And the instructions to people are clear:

- If you get symptoms, isolate immediately and get a test
- If you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace instructing you to isolate, you must

It is your civic duty, so you avoid unknowingly spreading the virus and you help to break the chain of transmission.

This will be voluntary at first, because we trust everyone to do the right thing. But we can quickly make it mandatory if that's what it takes.

Because, if we don't collectively make this work, then the only way forward is to keep the lockdown.

Put better, the more people follow the instructions, the safer we will be and the faster we can safely lift the lockdown.

So, do it for the people you love. Do it for your community. Do it for the NHS and do it for all those front line workers, who've gone out every day and put themselves at risk to keep you and your family safe.

And in return for following those instructions, you'll have the knowledge that, when the call came, you did your bit at a time when it really mattered, when the whole country, who are desperate to see their families, were counting on you to do the right thing. You did your bit to bring us all closer together, and closer to that day when we will be reunited.

This system will start tomorrow morning at 9am and the first people who will be contacted will be the people who received a positive result today.

This is a very distinct change on our approach and I just want to take a moment to recap the extent of the change.

Today, we say 'isolate' to anyone with coronavirus symptoms and their households. This remains vital.

From 9am tomorrow, in addition, if you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace advising you to isolate, then you must do that, whether you have symptoms or not.

Now, I also know that for those without symptoms who receive that call, I fully acknowledge that this is a big ask and you are going to make a sacrifice.

But this is for a purpose. And that purpose is the safety of everyone. Because we know you can have the virus and spread it to other people without ever having symptoms at all.

And it's not just the safety of all, but the liberty of all that is at stake here.

We are only in a position to re-open primary schools and outdoor markets – if they're COVID-secure – this coming Monday because we've flattened the curve and now we have this system in place.

In the coming weeks, we will gradually and very carefully move away from a lockdown that is national in scope, blanket in application and start moving towards a system that is much more targeted in scope and focuses local action

on tackling local flare-ups.

This will help us to restore some of the basic freedoms that matter so much to people, and doing some of the things that people are yearning to do, like seeing friends and family, booking a holiday or getting a haircut, all while controlling the virus and keeping people safe.

It is a brand new service on a scale never seen before. There will be bumps in the road and we will constantly improve it.

And in the weeks ahead we will ramp up the service still further. And once the system's bedded in we will roll out the NHS Contact Tracing App that is being piloted in the Isle of Wight.

And, of course, NHS Test and Trace is only one part of the answer, it's not the whole answer.

All of the action we're taking to get R down and keep R down, it all requires us to keep doing the right thing.

Testing and tracing will help us to hunt down this virus. It is one of the tools with which we can finish the job and we all need to play our part.

So please, stay alert, control the virus and save lives.

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs): What's available & how to apply

We recognise that every student faces individual circumstances and we regularly work with other organisations to raise awareness of the help and support available, and of how the DSAs application process works.

This helps us to deliver the best service we can, in the most appropriate way.

Further information is available below on DSAs.

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)

Full information is available at www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas but in summary;

If you are a student with a disability, DSAs exist to help with any extra essential costs you may have as a result of your disability.

This may cover;

- Specialist equipment – for example if you need a computer to run specialist software or braille display
- Non-medical helper – for example, if you need a BSL interpreter to attend lectures
- Travel – for example, if you need to use a taxi to attend University, rather than using public transport
- A range of general costs may also be considered, related to your disability.

The application process

DSAs do not depend on household income and do not need to be repaid. You can apply online if you are a full-time student in England and are applying for other support from Student Finance England at www.gov.uk/studentfinance

If you are not applying for any other finance then you can download an application form at www.gov.uk/student-finance-forms

Evidence of disability

You will be required to provide evidence of your disability but this will be made as easy as possible, especially at the moment, when social distancing may add other difficulties. For advice on what may be required www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/eligibility

You also may need to meet with an experienced Needs Assessor, however it will be possible to do this via video-link or telephone.

Please start the application process as soon as possible

Even if you are not certain which course or institution you may attend in the autumn, you are strongly advised to start the DSAs application process as soon as possible, to ensure that finance and support will be available for the start of term.

Further information

You may wish to visit www.thestudentroom.co.uk for further information.

Full time students in England can apply online now at www.gov.uk/studentfinance

Part-time and postgraduate students should currently download paper applications www.gov.uk/student-finance-forms

It is hoped to bring this service online during June 2020 but please do not delay in finding out what is required to start the process as quickly as possible.

OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian Checkpoints on the Russian Ukrainian border: UK statement

Thank you Mr Chairperson. I would like to start by thanking Ambassador Varga for updating the Permanent Council, and for demonstrating leadership by introducing measures to protect staff working in the Mission during the COVID-19 global crisis, as well as the local population.

The Minsk agreements call for permanent monitoring of the Ukraine-Russia State border and verification by the OSCE. Sadly your Mission cannot provide comprehensive monitoring of the border because of the absurd limitations placed upon it. You are only present at two border checkpoints along an uncontrolled segment of the border that stretches for hundreds of kilometres. Even within these two checkpoints, the observers' freedom of movement is extremely limited, creating blind spots. This impedes their capacity to fully observe activity at the checkpoints, including the trains that pass over the border near the Gukovo border checkpoint. The observers are prohibited from using any additional observation tools such as cameras or binoculars. They are also unable to check vehicles or interview people crossing the border.

Nonetheless, the Mission is still able to provide useful insight to the international community. The Mission's spot reports inform us about the so-called "humanitarian convoys" that Russia sends in violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Mission bears witness to the people in military-style outfits crossing the border from Russia into Ukraine. Your reporting also demonstrates that in sharp contrast to the restrictions imposed even on the Special Monitoring Mission by Russia-backed armed formations at the line of contact, movement continues, albeit reduced, from Russia to non-government controlled areas of Ukraine.

We also very much value the cooperation between your Mission and the SMM – noting the important link between ceasefire monitoring and border monitoring in helping to stabilise the security situation. We would be grateful if you could share more details of this.

The UK supports the Mission's work and pays tribute to the hard working staff serving in it. We recognise that the situation caused by the pandemic has made their role even more challenging and we commend them for continuing to fulfil the Mission's observation tasks. This is on top of the everyday complications already caused by Russia's refusal to grant the Mission legal status, such as having to operate on a cash only basis and without the assistance of locally recruited staff.

The UK will continue to support the work of this important Mission. We call on the Russian Federation in the strongest terms to end the unnecessary

limitations they have placed on the Mission's work. The establishment of genuinely comprehensive monitoring of the entire segment of the Ukraine-Russia State border outside Ukrainian government control, as well as the restoration of full Ukrainian control over that border, is essential. The UK joins the many other States around this table in calling for an extension of the Mission to the entirety of the uncontrolled section of the border. If Russia truly has nothing to hide, then they should cease their opposition to this expansion.

Finally, let me also take this opportunity to reiterate the UK's unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.