

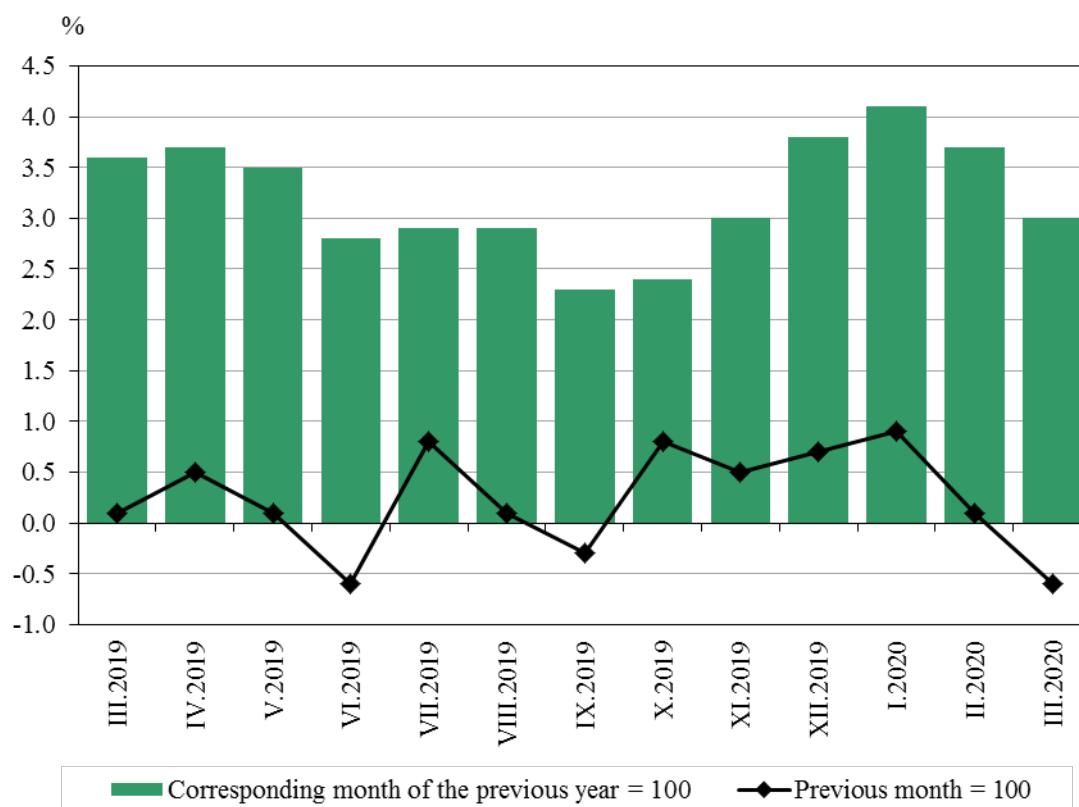
INFLATION AND CONSUMER PRICE INDICES IN MARCH 2020

Consumer price index (CPI)

The **consumer price index** in March 2020 compared to February 2020 was 99.4%, i.e. the monthly inflation was -0.6%. The inflation rate since the beginning of the year (March 2020 compared to December 2019) has been 0.4% and the annual inflation in March 2020 compared to March 2019 was 3.0% (Figure 1 and Annex, Table 1).

The annual average inflation, measured by CPI, in the last 12 months (April 2019 - March 2020) compared to the previous 12 months (April 2018 - March 2019) was 3.2%.

Figure 1. Inflation measured by CPI by months



In March 2020 compared to the previous month the prices of goods and services in the main consumer groups changed as follows:

- Food and non-alcoholic beverages - an increase of 0.1%;
- Alcoholic beverages and tobacco - the prices remained at the level of the previous month;
- Clothing and footwear - a decrease of 1.5%;
- Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels - a decrease of 0.1%;
- Furnishings, household equipment and routine maintenance of the house - a decrease of 0.5%;

- Health - an increase of 0.1%;
- Transport - a decrease of 2.7%;
- Communications - a decrease of 1.3%;
- Recreation and culture - a decrease of 4.1%;
- Education - the prices remained at the level of the previous month;
- Restaurants and hotels - an increase of 0.3%;
- Miscellaneous goods and service - an increase of 0.1%.

Harmonized index of consumer prices (HICP)

The **harmonized index of consumer prices** in March 2020 compared to February 2020 was 99.5%, i.e. the monthly inflation was -0.5%. The inflation rate since the beginning of the year (March 2020 compared to December 2019) has been 0.0% and the annual inflation in March 2020 compared to March 2019 was 2.4% (Annex, Table 2).

The annual average inflation, measured by HICP, in the last 12 months (April 2019 - March 2020) compared to the previous 12 months (April 2018 - March 2019) was 2.6%.

In terms of HICP, in March 2020 compared to the previous month the prices of goods and services in the main consumer groups changed as follows:

- Food and non-alcoholic beverages - an increase of 0.3%;
- Alcoholic beverages and tobacco - the prices remained at the level of the previous month;
- Clothing and footwear - a decrease of 1.3%;
- Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels - the prices remained at the level of the previous month;
- Furnishings, household equipment and routine maintenance of the house - a decrease of 0.8%;
- Health - an increase of 0.1%;
- Transport - a decrease of 1.6%;
- Communications - a decrease of 1.3%;
- Recreation and culture - a decrease of 1.7%;
- Education - the prices remained at the level of the previous month;
- Restaurants and hotels - a decrease of 0.2%;
- Miscellaneous goods and service - an increase of 0.2%.

Price index of a small basket (PISB)

The **price index of a small basket** in March 2020 compared to February 2020 was 100.0% and the overall increase since the beginning of the year (March 2020 compared to December 2019) has been 101.9% (Annex, Table 3).

In March 2020 compared to the previous month the prices of goods and services in the small basket for the 20% households with the lowest income changed as follows:

- Food products - a decrease of 0.1%;
- Non-food products - an increase of 0.1%;
- Services - an increase of 0.1%.

Methodological notes

The **consumer price index (CPI)** is the official measure of inflation in the Republic of Bulgaria. It measures the total relative price change of goods and services used by households for private (non-production) consumption and is calculated by applying the structure of the final monetary consumption expenditures of Bulgarian households. The main source of information for the expenditures is the household budget survey in the country. CPI in year t is calculated with the expenditures structure of year $t-1$.

The **Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices (HICP)** is the comparable measure of inflation across EU Member states. It is one of the criteria of price stability and readiness of Bulgaria to join the euro-zone. HICP, as well as CPI, measure the total relative price change of goods and services. Both indices are calculated using the same basket of goods and services, but differ with respect to the weights used. HICP is calculated through the use of weights, which reflect the individual and the collective consumption of all households (incl. institutional and foreign households) on the economic territory of the country. The main source of information for HICP weights is the national accounts data. HICP in year t is calculated with the weights of year $t-2$.

In compliance with Regulation (EC) No 2015/2010 since January 2016 the base year for HICP has been changed and the all indices have been calculated and published at 2015 as a base year. The time series have been recalculated according to the new base year and have been posted on the NSI website (www.nsi.bg).

The **Price Index of a Small Basket (PISB)** is a measurement of the relative average price changes of 100 socially useful and vital for living goods and services. The weights of this index reflect the expenditures of the 20% lowest household's incomes. The source of weights information is the Households Budget Survey in the country. This index in year t is calculated with the weights of year $t-1$.

The **chain** consumer price indices measure the price change in the current month compared to the previous month. The chain consumer price indices are used as a measure of **monthly inflation**.

The **12-month** consumer price indices measure the price changes occurring between the current month and the same month of the previous year. The 12-months consumer price indices are used as a measure of **annual inflation**.

Consumer price indices **over December of the previous year** measure the accumulated changes in prices of the current month with respect to December of the previous year. Consumer price indices over December of the previous year are used as measures of the **inflation since the beginning of the year**. In December of each year, the 12-months index is equal to the index over December of the previous year.

The **annual average** consumer price indices measure the average price change during the 12 months of the current year compared to the average price change during the 12 months of the previous year. The annual average consumer price indices are used as a measure of the **annual average inflation**.

Consumer price indices in the context of the COVID-19 crisis

Due to the epidemiological situation in Bulgaria and the health safety measures taken to contain the spread of the Coronavirus taken by the government and the National Assembly, the conduction of statistical survey of consumer prices providing information on the production of consumer price indices and inflation has been difficult.

The National CPI, HICP and the PISB for March 2020 have been produced according to Eurostat's methodological guidance on the compilation of the HICP in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, following the following principles:

- fixed statistical weights used in the calculation of the indices;
- production of all indices according to the ECOICOP classification (European Classification Of Individual Consumption by Purpose);
- minimizing the number of imputed prices and sub-indices where possible;
- estimation of missing price observations by applying imputation methods.

The percentage of missing price observations for March 2020 is 24%, distributed according to ECOICOP main headings as follows:

(Per cent)	
Commodity groups	Missing price observations
00 Total CPI	24
01 Food and non-alcoholic beverages	27
02 Alcoholic beverages and tobacco	28
03 Clothing and footwear	29
04 Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels	8
05 Furnishings, household equipment and routine household maintenance	18
06 Health	21
07 Transport	15
08 Communication	3
09 Recreation and culture	23
10 Education	11
11 Restaurants and hotels	26
12 Miscellaneous goods and service	24

The missing price observation's estimation has been carried out by using the imputation methods recommended by Eurostat and agreed with the Member States:

- with the nearest aggregate index (sub-index) in the hierarchical structure of the index (at a product level) - for missing price observations of products that are available on the market;
- adjusting the price from the previous month with a seasonal factor (carry forward with a seasonal correction factor) - for seasonal products that are not available on the market (closed markets) in the second half of March 2020 (passenger air transport, package holidays and hotels in holiday centers and resorts).

Annex

Table 1

Consumer price indices in March 2020

(Per cent)

Commodity groups	2019 weights	March 2020		
		Previous month = 100	December 2019 = 100	Corresponding month of the previous year = 100
00 Total CPI	100.000	99.4	100.4	103.0
01 Food and non-alcoholic beverages	30.093	100.1	103.3	106.7
02 Alcoholic beverages and tobacco	5.134	100.0	100.2	102.1
03 Clothing and footwear	3.995	98.5	92.3	99.7
04 Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels	16.866	99.9	100.5	102.3
05 Furnishings, household equipment and routine household maintenance	4.572	99.5	99.7	100.7
06 Health	7.777	100.1	100.7	102.9
07 Transport	9.621	97.3	96.9	98.7
08 Communication	5.204	98.7	98.8	96.8
09 Recreation and culture	5.973	95.9	96.0	101.7
10 Education	0.404	100.0	100.7	103.4
11 Restaurants and hotels	5.872	100.3	101.5	106.0
12 Miscellaneous goods and service	4.489	100.1	101.3	101.2
Foods	31.390	100.1	103.2	106.5
Non-foods	34.512	98.9	98.4	99.9
Catering	5.374	100.4	101.7	106.3
Services	28.724	98.9	99.3	102.1

Table 2

Harmonized indices of consumer prices in March 2020

Commodity groups	2018 weights	March 2020			
		2015 = 100	Previous month = 100	December 2019 = 100	Corresponding month of the previous year = 100
	%	%			
00 Total HICP	1000.000	106.46	99.5	100.0	102.4
01 Food and non-alcoholic beverages	227.072	116.88	100.3	103.1	106.6
02 Alcoholic beverages and tobacco	63.136	109.99	100.0	100.3	102.2
03 Clothing and footwear	36.509	93.61	98.7	93.2	100.0
04 Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels	106.234	111.51	100.0	100.6	102.2
05 Furnishings, household equipment and routine household maintenance	60.703	100.16	99.2	99.3	99.9
06 Health	74.227	103.61	100.1	100.7	102.6
07 Transport	148.685	95.02	98.4	96.9	99.1
08 Communication	54.222	90.11	98.7	98.8	96.8
09 Recreation and culture	73.727	103.92	98.3	98.4	101.5
10 Education	15.056	115.54	100.0	100.6	103.1
11 Restaurants and hotels	84.742	117.82	99.8	100.7	105.0
12 Miscellaneous goods and service	55.687	110.54	100.2	101.1	101.9

Table 3

Price indices of 100 socially useful and vital for the living goods and services in the small basket for the 20% lowest income households in March 2020

(Per cent)

Commodity groups	2019 weights	March 2020
		Previous month = 100
Total PISB	100.000	100.0
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	49.396	99.9
Clothing and footwear	3.564	98.7
Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels	27.199	99.9
Furnishings, household equipment and routine household maintenance	2.563	100.5
Health	11.080	100.1
Transport	1.399	100.1
Communication	0.295	100.0
Recreation and culture	0.492	100.0
Miscellaneous goods and service	4.013	102.2
Foods	49.396	99.9
Non-foods	28.454	100.1
Services	22.150	100.1