

Print sprint: Bosnians 3D print face-shields to combat coronavirus

March 26 2020, by Rusmir Smajilhodzic



Five 3D printers are running around the clock at Zenica's Faculty of Engineering and Technology

In small university labs and private homes across Bosnia, 3D printers are buzzing around the clock to produce face shields for doctors treating coronavirus patients in one of Europe's poorest countries.

Short on [medical staff](#), respirators and even basic face masks, the Balkan state is bracing for the worst as [coronavirus](#) cases steadily tick up, so far totalling 180 infections and three deaths in the country of 3.5 million.

The government is trying to import protective gear, but in the face of soaring demand internationally, no one knows when it will arrive.

In the meantime, citizens are stepping in.

On Saturday, professors and students at the University of Zenica, a small town in central Bosnia, started printing plastic bases for plexiglass face shields that they are giving away to hospitals and ambulances for free.

"These visors are mainly intended for medical staff who are in direct contact with patients," said Mirza Oruc, a 38-year-old professor who helped start the project.

It has since gone viral, with schools, organisations and individuals across the country harnessing their 3D printers to join the effort.

Several companies are also helping provide the necessary materials.

"The small community is growing and more than 100 printers are now running for this purpose," Oruc said.

The first copies were churned out in the small laboratory (iDEALab) in Zenica's Faculty of Engineering and Technology, where five 3D printers are now running 24 hours a day.

The team started with an open source design from Prusa, a Czech manufacturer of the printers, and then tweaked the model to meet doctors' needs in cooperation with the local hospital.

"Initially, it took us about four hours to print these elements for a shield," said Belmin Hinovic, a 24-year-old student wearing a [face mask](#) and gloves as he worked.

"But as demand is increasing dramatically, we are trying to speed up the printing process and we can now make a mask in three hours."

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