

Republic of Albania
Ministry of Interior

Intervention of the **Minister of Interior of Albania,**

H.E.Mr. Bledi ÇUÇI

to IOM 112 Session Council

High Level Segment

29 November 2021

Through this video message, I would like to share with you Albania's experience regarding the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on borders, migration and mobility, as well as some lessons we need for the future.

The IOM Regional Project “Addressing COVID-19 challenges within the Migrant and Refugee Response in the Western Balkans”, funded by the EU, assisted governments to provide support to migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and authorities to address the challenges brought by the pandemic in Albania, in coordination between IOM and UNHCR and in line with respective agencies’ mandates and expertise.

For over a year, Albania has been part of the joint operation with FRONTEX, the first outside the European Union, which aims to control and tackle irregular migration at the country’s southern border. Despite the unprecedented restrictive measures applied due to the pandemic, the number of irregular migrants apprehended at the Greek-Albanian border area increased significantly.

IOM support for Albania in relation to COVID -19 included: 62,000 pieces of personal protective equipment (PPE) donated to the Albanian State Police to ensure safe continuity of border and migration management activities.

Three accommodation containers and sanitary facilities for 18 people installed at the border crossing point Kakavija, to align the facility with COVID-19 protocols in place in Albania.

Hand-washing stations established in Gerhot and Kakavija, which, together with the TV screens installed in Kapshtica, Gerhot and Kakavija displaying information on COVID-19 measures, represent additional risk mitigating measures implemented in the Centers.

Albania will make further improvements in a coordinated process of management of mixed movements within the broader context of managing migration and are necessary to ensure sustainability of the project intervention and for this its recommended to continue the discussions at high-level among national and international stakeholders.

Contingency Planning for managing mixed migration flows will be approved to be ready for implementation in case needed and it should be regularly updated, including also reference to the pandemic situation.

Ensure the equal inclusion of migrants in national vaccination plans to decrease the risk of transmission in these populations with spillovers to the national population remains an important issue for us.

It is also a priority for us to enhance local coordination of the services to migrants and vulnerable categories specifically in border municipalities and Tirana, between local authorities and services providers, in order to ensure effective ongoing process starting from screening and referrals to the services to be provided by municipality.

Thank you!