

EU IOM Video (7 minutes)

70 years of the International Organisation for Migration. 70 years of helping people. Fleeing war and persecution.

Hungary, Czechoslovakia. Chile, Vietnam, Kuwait. Rwanda, Western Balkans, Pakistan, Bangladesh

Where there's war, disaster or conflict

The IOM is there to help people on the move.

Providing with UNHCR safe journeys and welcome homes to refugees through resettlement.

Supporting governments to manage migration. To design strategies and policies and build capacity.

Providing data and analysis we need to make policies.

In those 70 years, The IOM has grown in size and impact and importance.

Became part of the UN family.

The urgency of your mission remains unchanged.

Most recently in Afghanistan – with millions displaced, starvation threatening the country.

Many have left but the IOM is still on the ground.

Or Belarus – where the IOM will help people return and reintegrate. People tricked by a regime that instrumentalises migrants for its own purposes.

And in the global pandemic we've suffered for the last two years.

The IOM rose to the challenge.

Giving critical support to help migrants stranded because of the virus.

Urging governments to include migrants in the vaccine roll out. To include migrants in health and recovery plans.

Promoting digital solutions to manage migration.

Giving communities the tools to stop the disease from spreading.

Throughout the pandemic the EU and IOM worked closely together. In the Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration.

Which adapted programmes to continue delivering assistance and protect vulnerable migrants. In Africa.

And raised awareness on safe migration during the pandemic. Through cooperation and community outreach.

And together, Commission and IOM devised a toolkit to help integrate migration into response and recovery plans.

Our goal today is to learn the lessons of the pandemic. And to prepare for the future.

For me those lessons are the following.

First: Europe cannot fight the pandemic without migrants. And our economies cannot recover without them.

The pandemic really made striking obvious to everyone the contributions migrants make.

Migrants work in Europe as doctors and nurses. Fight for people's lives in hospitals, on intensive care. Or work in essential services.

Migrants are not "them" they are part of "us".

We must now also include migrants in the recovery of our societies and economies.

Second Lesson – Migration went into slowdown. But not into shutdown. We managed migration by going digital.

During the pandemic, in OECD countries. Migration dropped between 15 and 40 per cent.

Asylum applications fell by 30 per cent. Resettlement dropped by 65 per cent.

We could uphold the right to apply for asylum. And an individual process. With remote interviews and digital procedures

Promote integration. With digital tools for education and language learning.

Offer job counselling and training for migrants online.

Fight racism and discrimination with online campaigns.

As we slowly leave the pandemic, we must hold on to these accomplishments.

We must also make sure migrants can use digital tools.

Boost digital literacy. And digital access to computers and Internet.

These are important goals of the action plan on integration and inclusion I launched last year.

Third lesson. We did not allow the virus to stop mobility. Closing borders also stops travel, trade, and tourism on which recovery depends.

Inside the European Union we've done everything to fight the virus AND uphold free movement.

And on the global level: we need to both stop the spread of the virus AND allow trade and travel to continue. As much as safety allows.

Last week I presented proposals for new travel rules. Shifting focus from countries to persons.

So that from next March, you can enter the EU. If you are recovered or vaccinated.

It's one more reason why speeding up global vaccinations is a top EU priority.

As Team Europe, we donated 3 billion euro to the COVAX global vaccine sharing mechanism.

Via Covax, more than 525 million doses reached 144 countries.

And as a Union, we exported more than 1 billion doses worldwide. Making the EU is the world's biggest vaccine exporter.

And we now need to step up global vaccination rates, helping to reach the 70% goal by next summer. We can only be safe, if all are safe.

And that brings me to my final lesson. The virus only increased the need for cooperation on migration.

I want us to build tailor made migration partnerships. Designed to fit the needs and challenges of countries of origin and countries of transit.

I want more people to have more opportunities to live, study and work legally in the European Union.

Our new European Blue Card offers opportunities to highly skilled migrants.

Talent Partnerships will help people to work, train or study in the EU.

Next year, I will put forward a skills and talent package. To make it easier for people of all skill levels, to work in Europe.

But to improve possibilities for legal migration, it's essential to fight smugglers, to reduce irregular migration and improve returns.

And that's why we will continue our work with IOM on voluntary returns and reintegration in North Africa – for example in Libya. The Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration will continue with EU financial support.

So let's work together. To better manage migration. In the spirit of the Global Compact.

I thank António Vitorino. For hosting this meeting. And for our continued cooperation.

And I thank the IOM.

By ending on this final thought:

The first people you helped to save.

70 years ago.

Have lived fulfilling lives. Started careers. Fell in love, started families. With children and grandchildren.

A success repeated, millions of times over.

I want you to repeat this success story.

As often as is necessary. As long as is necessary.