



INTERVENTION IN OIM HIGH SEGMENT LEVEL .COVID 19 and impact on Migration

Good afternoon , thank you for inviting me to attend tis High level segment on Covid ,Migrations and impact on Mobility

Since 2020, as you well know, the whole world faces one of the most devastating pandemics mankind can remember. Almost two years later, the fight against the virus is still a milestone in the policies of any Government at all levels.

Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed and exacerbated underlying vulnerabilities in OECD and EU societies. Economic and societal transformations will impact on international migration, and migration policies need to prepare for these changes.

The pandemic will have a number of significant longer term effects on society and the economy, and thus also on migration. It will also act as an accelerator of change.

Among other aspects, as in other countries, in Spain the pandemic has brought to light that migrants were frequently frontline workers, contributing to the continuity of healthcare services or maintaining the food supply chain, while being at a much higher risk of COVID-19 infection, and at the same time, migrant workers are more likely to be concentrated in sectors which are at higher risk of redundancy.

In most countries, relief measures allowed registered migrants and their families to remain temporarily, with job retention schemes and other targeted or general support measures accessible to foreign residents and access to treatment for COVID-19 available for all categories of migrants.

One question that will arise post-pandemic is the effect of the phasing out of some of these temporary measures.

Important changes and innovations are likely to be a particular focus for migration policymakers in at least four areas in the coming years:

- Digitalization of migration management.
- Biosecure borders: turning to permanent migration, while selective migration systems have largely focused on skills and formal education, it is not unlikely that health requirements will become more pressing for residence permit applications in the years to come.



- Digital nomads: There may be an increasing disconnect between countries of nationality, residence and work, particularly for highly skilled workers.
- Changes in migrant status: some countries enabled significant numbers of people with short-term visas or without legal status to remain on their territory.

The lessons learned from this pandemic should help countries to be better prepared to anticipate and respond to future migration challenges, in particular by exploring and articulating pathways for legal, orderly and safe migration, enhancing intrasolidarity and in cooperation with countries of origin and transit.

Many challenges are still to come, nonetheless, I'd like to focus on some of the measures that the Spanish Government implemented in 2020, when COVID 19 vented its anger on Spain. As a result of the latter, the Secretary of State for Migration had to postpone some of the initiatives we had in mind and, at the same time, we had to promote other ones according to the new scenery we had to tackle.

As a reminder of that time, please let me refresh you some of those measures carried out by the Secretary of State for Migration of the Spanish Government in the context of Covid 19.

The underlying lines of those actions were, and still are:

- To leave no one behind
- To avoid situations of unexpected irregularity so that the economic stoppage linked to the measures to contain the pandemic has no effect on the regular situation in the country of foreigners fully integrated into our society.
- To recognize the right to work of people who are in Spain on a regular basis, but whose status does not contain that room - a key measure, for example, in the agricultural sector, considered as basic one, in which border closures prevented seasonal workers who usually came to the country to join the campaigns.



- To accelerate administrative procedures in order to grant residence and work authorizations for foreigners for both the agricultural and the health sector.

Furthermore, other measures implemented by Spain in order to avoid situations of unexpected irregularity during the lockdown were:

1. ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES

During the State of Alarm and as a result of the suspension of the administrative procedures, a Communication was sent to the immigration offices with the aim of providing legal protection and extending authorizations to foreigners and companies that, at that time, had an open immigration procedure.

Besides, Spain approved other measures to foreigners who had already started legal authorizations as well as family roots and social roots procedures. For example, in this case, we identified a total of 12,676 applicants who had submitted a request for social roots before the declaration of the state of alarm.

Furthermore, on the relocation of foreign minors for schooling purposes, specifying the conditions for extending the stay of minors who travel to Spain each year for schooling purposes. With this measure, the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations protects those boys and girls who, being in a regular situation in Spain and finding their return to their country of origin impossible due to the circumstances derived from the Covid-19 crisis.

As far as the labour market is concerned, The COVID 19 crisis has undeniably highlighted the positive contribution of migration in essential sectors of the EU where 13% of workers are immigrants.

During these months and as a consequence of the increase in hiring needs in essential sectors, a series of measures have been adopted to enable access to the labor market for foreigners residing in Spain, but who, as a consequence of their status, were not authorized to work.

These measures have mainly focused on two key sectors during the COVID crisis: agriculture and the health sector.



2. BORDER RESTRICTIVE MEASURES

Regarding borders, a series of restrictions have been imposed since the beginning of the pandemic, both on the crossing of internal borders and external, which have counted, within the framework of the decisions adopted by the EU as a whole, from a number of exceptions depending on the essential nature of the passenger category or the sector.

Spain, as other Member States, also took part in the “Love is not tourism campaign” in order to allow third-country nationals who are not spouses or registered partners, but in stable relationships (who could not enter as a result of these restrictions and were separated by the pandemic) to enter the MS.

Moreover and regarding to our Host System, it is important to underline that in our centers, during the State of Alarm, we have been attending all the sanitary restrictions implemented and that all our residents and Asylum Seekers have been vaccinated, since the end of that period.

In the same way, and in parallel with the Spanish vaccination scheme, all the residents in humanitarian facilities are also being vaccinated.

3. NEW MEASURES:

To improve our migration policy, we have been developing in post pandemic context, some other measures to facilitate new entries to regular migrants, regarding the inclusion of certain categories that are considered key to the country's economic development, such as audiovisual sector.

In that sense I have to mention the Protocol for the entry of highly qualified professionals who carry out their activity in Spain linked to a project in the audiovisual sector. The goal is aimed at facilitating the arrival to our country of qualified professionals and, above all, the arrival of productions that involve a significant investment, hiring of national labor and impact on the country's image, is essential.

To sum up, I have just mentioned some of the main measures that the Ministry for Inclusion, Social Security and Migration of the Spanish Government has implemented in the framework of the COVID 19 in order to improve people's lives. We worked and we are still working to mitigate the effects of the COVID 19 on people and on immigrant population.



4. CONCLUSION:

- To conclude my intervention, The COVID 19 crisis has highlighted, irrefutably, the positive contribution of migration in key sectors in the EU where 13% of workers are migrants; in some occupations, they represent a third of the workforce and in Spain this is the trend too.
- On the other hand, the pandemic has been an accelerator of numerous changes, such as, for example, the digital transformation or the green economy where migration can play an important role. Therefore, a well-managed and planned migration policy can become an element to promote and enhance this transformation.
- The lessons learned from this pandemic should help countries to be better prepared to anticipate and respond to future migration challenges, in particular by exploring and articulating pathways for legal, orderly and safe migration, enhancing intrasolidarity and in cooperation with countries of origin and transit.

Thank you very much , dear assistants , for your kind interest;