



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE
Economic and Environmental Activities**

OCEEA Webinar

**The impact of COVID-19 on Labour Migration
Vienna, 26 June 2020**

Welcoming Remarks

Ambassador Vuk Žugić

Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the fourth webinar organized by my Office to discuss the complex implications of the impact of COVID-19 on economies and the environment. With the support of a variety of experts, the aim is to shed light on the unprecedented challenges triggered by the pandemic and gain a better understanding of key areas of action that could benefit from the OSCE support.

I therefore wish to thank the speakers who kindly accepted our invitation. My Office has established long-standing co-operation with a wide range of players in the field of migration governance, with the aim to enhance synergies according to respective roles and mandates. I am particularly glad to welcome ILO, IOM, RANEPa and the European Commission to today's discussion that will focus on labour mobility and migration.

Distinguished participants,

In my brief introduction, allow me to spend few words on why discussing labour migration is essential in view of the post-pandemic recovery.

As a relevant volume of economic research confirms, human and labour mobility are key drivers of socio-economic and human capital development. By accessing employment and education opportunities abroad, individuals enjoy chances to expand their skills and improve their professional prospects. This process benefits individuals, because it contributes to their personal growth and well-being; it benefits hosting societies, by filling labour shortages and

contributing to fiscal revenues; and it benefits countries of origin, through the flow of remittances. The protracted lockdown, although necessary to save lives, have impacted throughout the migration process, disrupting human connectivity and prospects for development.

Restoring smooth mobility and flow of earnings will not be easy. Economic factors will play a key role: the massive loss of jobs will hit already precarious employment, those sectors that often rely extensively on migrants' contribution, especially women. But COVID-19 has added a further emotional stress factor, boosting fears and growing negative attitudes, particularly towards migrants.

The pandemic has indeed amplified existing fragilities. Already before the crisis, diverging approaches of countries of origin and destination had highlighted main pitfalls of migration governance strategies. Yet, together with challenges, this crisis is offering the opportunity to harness our strengths: dialogue, co-operation, values. The OSCE and UN commitments provide the long-term vision, as they are framed around the key concept that well-governed migration is pivotal to ensure positive development outcomes. Now it is time to pull together our collective intelligence, to step up our efforts.

Dear Colleagues,

Before concluding, allow me to remind a key lesson learned from this pandemic: "We are all together in this". And together, we can find ways to turn this crisis into an opportunity.

I wish this webinar today can offer one additional opportunity to discuss issues that are relevant for our present and our future. I therefore encourage you all to participate actively so to offer sources of inspiration for renewed, joined efforts.

My Office stands ready to keep the dialogue ongoing, in the spirit of continuous search for common grounds and broad-based action.

Thank you