

## EMN – OECD Webinar

# “EU and OECD Member States responses to managing residence permits and migrant unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic”

30 July 2020, 10.30 – 11.45 (CEST)

### Questions & answers

**Q: Did you already take in the Green Deal possibilities also for the migrant population? New jobs with no specific disadvantage for TCN's?**

**A (Laurent Aujean):** *Indeed, there will be a need and possibility for both migrants and natives to upskill and reskill in new occupations. The new skills agenda adopted by the European Commission on 1 July 2020 proposes several support measures in this regard:*

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223>

**Q: I suppose that many migrants are rather working in the informal job market. They will most probably be heavily affected, but they don't appear in any statistics. Those TCN in official jobs will most probably follow the same logic as all employees. Maybe they might even be better protected not to risk discrimination.**

**A (Laurent Aujean):** *The presentation during the webinar was indeed based on official statistics (labour force survey and administrative data from employment ministries) that generally exclude those working in the informal sector.*

*For those working in the formal sector (ie the majority of third country nationals) the risk of losing a job may not be similar than other employees because of their disproportionately higher share of temporary contracts, shorter job tenure and a different distribution across sectors and occupations (less in the public sector, more in sectors likely to be negatively affected, less tele-workable occupations, etc).*

*JRC paper:*

[https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC120730/a\\_vulnerable\\_workforce\\_migrant\\_workers\\_in\\_the\\_covide19\\_pandemic\\_online.pdf](https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC120730/a_vulnerable_workforce_migrant_workers_in_the_covide19_pandemic_online.pdf)

*European Semester Communication (May 2020) :* [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-european-semester-commission-communication-country-specific-recommendations\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-european-semester-commission-communication-country-specific-recommendations_en)

**Q: What measures are countries implementing to facilitate the issuing of residence permits during the pandemic? In Ireland before the onset of the pandemic applications had to be made in person at a public office; that is not currently possible. Most permits due to expire have been automatically extended. New permits are being facilitated via electronic means**

**A (Adolfo Sommarribas):** *This issue was mainly covered during the later stages of my presentation. For additional information regarding how the EU Member States have addressed this issue, please refer to the EMN Inform 'EU and OECD Member States responses to managing residence permits and migrant unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic' and associated Working Paper. The example of Ireland is quite advanced with regard to digitalisation. However, TCNs will still have to submit the originals at a later stage. The digitalisation must cover all the procedure and this is something that we expect Member States to study in the medium term in order to simplify and facilitate all the immigration procedures.*

**Q: Regarding TCNs who lose their employment (formal and informal sector): what kind of risk do you see for secondary movements in order to, for example, apply for asylum in another Member State? I first of all think of TCN who often claim asylum within the EU+.**

**A: Adolfo Sommarribas:** *The research supporting the Inform and webinar focused on legal migration and this issue was not directly covered. However, in one of the ad-hoc queries launched we included a question which indeed did explore whether increases in applications for international protection following loss of employment and/or withdrawal of residence permits were reported. However, no Member State reported that this type of situation was happening. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that the loss of employment or drop in income are not grounds to apply for international protection.*

*Even if the borders were closed, irregular migrants continue to arrive in Europe and rates have not been reduced. One of the main concerns is what happens with all those in the formal sector, who lost their jobs moving to another country trying to look for employment. The problem here can be divided in two: those individuals who lost their employment will be in an irregular situation so they are vulnerable to exploitation. The second problem is that given the contraction of the economy (between 8 and 12%) in the EU, and contraction of the labour market, this will make it more difficult for irregular migrants to find employment, as the legal migrants as well as EU citizens will be competing for the scarce jobs that are available.*

*The second concern is if TCNs who lose their employment do apply for asylum. In the asylum procedure the immigration authorities with the collaboration of the police will interview the applicant in order to determine their identity and itinerary. If the applicant has been a regular migrant and residing in the EU for some time, it will be easy for the authorities to find an electronic trace of this individual and in consequence most likely a rejection of the application. As I mentioned above the loss of employment or drop of income are not grounds for international protection.*

*With irregular migrants who lose their jobs, that could be a problem as they do not want to be identified. Furthermore, as I mentioned before there will be a competition for available positions between regular and irregular migrants.*

**A Laurent Aujean:** *In addition, let's not forget that (until now) the number of asylum applications strongly decreased since March 2020, see Eurostat data.*

*[https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=miqr\\_asyappctzm&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=miqr_asyappctzm&lang=en)*

*As well as the number of irregular arrivals according to FRONTEX: <https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news-release/situation-at-eu-external-borders-arrivals-down-in-first-half-of-2020-UdNxM5>*

**Q: With regard to temporary residence permits, have your studies looked at how the pandemic has exacerbated existing problems? In Portugal for example, delays in renewing provisional residence cards by immigration services was already a problem before, with third country nationals losing benefits for example because of this. So, the pandemic has made this issue more visible but it is not new.**

**A (Adolfo Sommaribas):** *The pandemic has shown that in most Member States there were many backlogs due to lack of digitalisation. The pandemic made also the problem more visible due to the duration of the lockdown. We will have to continue to improve the use of electronic means in order to improve the management of immigration procedures; the pandemic indeed exacerbated existing problems but at the same time pushes Member States to find the right solutions.*

**Q: With regards to the digitalisation of the migration management system and better use of technology to support migration procedures, are there any "front-runners" within the OECD that have moved on this already?**

**A (Jean-Christophe Dumont):** *In OECD non-EU settlement countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand) are well advanced already and process most visa applications online. Recently Chile also went 100% online. In Europe, Greece took advantage of the lockdown to speed up its digitalisation programme and a number of countries already offer for example online language courses to immigrants. The German Presidency of the EU puts the emphasis on digitalisation and indeed BAMF is leading the way on this topic notably when it comes to asylum processing.*

**Q: At PICUM we have also been gathering some of this information from our members for some of the countries. While many progressive measures have been taken, some of the gaps we have nonetheless seen mean that people will most likely fall into irregularity unless more measures are taken soon. For example, very short-term extensions of residence permits and uncertainty, as you highlighted, about whether or not people can renew if they have reduced income or hours, or lost their job. Could the speakers please comment on this aspect and how labour migration policies might need to change to include migrant workers who have limited hours of work or in non-standard employment? Could you say more about the examples there might be already on this?**

**A (Laurent Aujean):** *Recent policy initiatives mapped here on the European website on integration: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/covid-19s-impact-on-migrant-communities>*

*The European Commission will present in the last quarter of 2020 an Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion – it is expected that labour market integration but also social inclusion and access to services will remain key priorities of integration policies. An open public consultation launched last week on integration is available here: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/the-european-commission-launches-a-public-consultation-on-integration-and-a-call-for-an-expert-migrant-group>*

**A (Jean-Christophe Dumont):** *Indeed the temporary extension offered during the lockdown and beyond will come to an end and a longer term solution needs to be found, especially during a period when return to the countries of origin is still difficult notably because of limited commercial flights.*

**A (Adolfo Sommaribas):** *As I mentioned the Member States have demonstrated flexibility and leniency towards regular migrants who have lost their jobs or suffered a drop of income providing them the possibility to find a new job in order to maintain their residence status in the host Member*

*State. Nevertheless, the situation is quite complicated because these measures have an economic cost that cannot be extended indefinitely and have to be balanced with the economic interests of employers which are also struggling to survive the crisis. With a contraction in all the economies of the Member States I consider that a general long-term solution in the short or medium term for these individuals will be very difficult to find. Nevertheless, the indications made by Laurent can be points to be develop in the future.*

**Q: In Ireland there is online renewal possibilities and great effort for automatic renewal for expiring stamps; however many are facing difficulties renewing their stays and there are serious issues for those whose passports unluckily expired during the pandemic and are now unable to renew their residency due to embassies' closures and are unable to get a new passport as no automatic passport renewal system is in place. I wonder if similar issues are experienced elsewhere and how are these being dealt with?**

**A (Jean-Christophe Dumont):** *Chile did exactly this during the past few months. See also my reply above*

**A (Adolfo Sommarribas):** *We already were confronted with the situation of expired passports with Venezuelan nationals who had a residence permit but the Venezuelan authorities refused to renew their passports. In some Member States, in case that the renewal of the national passport becomes very difficult or burdensome there is the possibility of requesting the issuance of a travel document for foreigners which will substitute for the national passport.*

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