

IOM Cyprus signs 3-year extension of the Semi-Independent Living program for Unaccompanied Children



IOM Cyprus and the Social Welfare Services at the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance of Cyprus have signed an agreement on the extension of the program "Semi-independent Living for Unaccompanied Migrant Children" until December 2023.

The program was launched in April 2020 and it aims to ease the difficult transition to adulthood for unaccompanied migrant children in Cyprus through semi-independent housing and other support. Through the provision of semi-independent living opportunities and adequate protection, the IOM programme will help to promote the inclusion of children in local society and the safeguarding of their rights.

IOM has established a multi-stakeholder coordination network (government departments, local authorities and partners) in order to ensure that individual needs of older unaccompanied migrant children are addressed by ensuring their access to education and vocational training, health care services and psychosocial support.

11 unaccompanied migrant children have already been moved out of first reception centers and crowded conditions into the semi-independent living units. Seven of them have aged out of the program and are already in employment, while the remaining four were registered in a public education program created in accordance with their background and individual profiles.

Message by Antonio Vittorino on International Migrants Day 2020



Last year, on International Migrants Day, we highlighted the importance of social cohesion and recognized the generosity of societies supporting migrants in their communities, unaware of what 2020 would bring. We declared migrants to be "champions of resilience when times are tough," unaware of how they - and we - would be put to the test. This year we have all witnessed first-hand the critical role migrants have played in our societies, on the front lines of our fight against COVID-19, caring for the sick, working to maintain essential services. The dedication and entrepreneurial spirit we have seen this year reminds us that, as we move from pandemic response to recovery over the coming months, migrants will be an integral part of that return to normal life. But, for this to happen, we must reinforce the efforts already made by many countries to ensure migrants are fully included in our COVID-19 responses, including access to social services, and ensuring they do not get left behind. Many migrants have found themselves reduced to poverty, the first to be let go and the last to be rehired. Economically disadvantaged, many have become stranded, unable to return home, while still more have been forced to return without due regard for their safety. At the extremes, migrants may be prey to the criminals who would exploit their vulnerability for profit. Human rights are not 'earned' by virtue of being a hero or a victim, but are an entitlement of everyone, regardless of origin, age, gender and status. But support and protection are needed if migrants are to contribute fully to their, and our, recovery. As vaccines become available, migrants regardless of their status must be ensured equitable access to national programming, not as a special class of people, but as friends, neighbours and co-workers. The global response to COVID-19 presents a unique opportunity to reimagine human mobility from the ground up, to implement the vision of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and build prosperous, healthy and resilient communities. We, together, can make it happen.

AVRR program renewed until June 2022



IOM Cyprus has completed the implementation of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration program for the period January 2019 - September 2020 and has agreed for its renewal until June 2022.

IOM Cyprus has been implementing the AVRR program since 2016, having assisted more than 700 migrants to voluntarily return to their countries of origin. Some of them have received personalized reintegration assistance, aiming at their sustainable social and economic reintegration.

As regards the recently concluded period, 357 program beneficiaries were able to return safely to their countries of origin. Since October 2019, IOM Cyprus has taken up enhanced information provision to relevant government services, such as the Asylum Service, the Kofinou Reception Center, the First Reception Centre in Kokkinotrimithia and the District Departments of the Aliens and Immigration Service of the Cyprus Police.

The program continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, with IOM officials holding online counselling sessions with interested migrants during the time that government restrictive measures were in place, while food and necessity items were provided to the vulnerable beneficiaries of the program pending the resumption of international flights.

The program is co-funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Republic of Cyprus.

IOM and the Republic of Cyprus Assisted 84 Migrants with Voluntary Return via Charter Flight



IOM Cyprus and the Republic of Cyprus, in coordination with IOM Nepal and IOM India, organized the voluntary return of 63 Nepali and 21 Indian nationals on 19 September. The mixed group of men and women were mainly students no longer able to pay college fees in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Their charter flight left Larnaca bound for Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi, India, where the first group of passengers disembarked, after which the remaining returnees continued to Nepal's Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu.

In accordance with existing measures, all returnees were tested for COVID-19 prior to their departure. On flight day, IOM Cyprus staff members assisted the returnees with all airport procedures and one-time cash assistance was given to each as a contribution to their initial expenses upon arrival and immediate needs, chiefly onward travel to their home communities.

Upon arrival, information leaflets were distributed, explaining COVID-19 measures, reintegration support and how to contact IOM and the respective country offices.