



Mapping Responses to COVID-19

How ICPA is responding to the pandemic

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ICPA has indeed seen significant challenges to the way we operate and also in the narrative landscape of migration, but also learnings and opportunities in both areas. Being a small agile organisation is definitely an asset in this time and helps ensure that we can flexibly respond to changing conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and quickly work on redesigning our 2020 workplan.

As it became clear that our core work of in-person capacity building sessions were not going to be feasible, we reflected on how we can leverage our core competencies and best contribute to supporting the network of European activists engaged in narrative change work. So, we've invested in adapting our pedagogy and materials and offer online support combining smaller blocks of training and more individual mentoring, with lots of peer learning opportunities built in to foster collaborations and a much-needed sense of community and solidarity. Many of the groups we are supporting are truly relieved that we are continuing our work together and indeed, it has been an opportunity for us to really dig into ways to better work and learn together online through experimenting with various tools.

The narrative landscape in the field of migration has also shifted through the pandemic, presenting both challenges and opportunities. On the more negative side, attempts by populists around the world to brand this a "foreign virus" from an "invisible enemy", combined with border closures, immigration bans and even worse treatment of vulnerable refugee populations all present significant challenges. The predicted economic downturn may further exacerbate this. On a more positive note, the immediate action of some governments to protect vulnerable groups provides strong leverage for longer-term advocacy efforts. On the narratives front, the broad-based community solidarity and increased salience of vulnerability we're all experiencing due to the current lockdown opens up new narrative spaces for value-driven advocacy efforts. We're currently building on this momentum in our support for a coalition working on an EU mobility campaign and will develop messages on these currently shared values of community, solidarity and vulnerability and anticipate them having deeper resonance with the broader public. This group also thinks that this may be the first time that mainstream populations have directly experienced rights restrictions through the lockdown and this also presents a significant advocacy opening.

A final part of our immediate response is our decision to fast track the development of new strategic communications resources planned for later in the year and work to ensure wider reach of our existing migration narratives toolkit (narrativechange.org). We're now working with partners on the ground to complete the translation of the toolkit into Italian and Greek to support strengthening the voice to kick back against anti-migrant narratives and set the groundwork for more inclusive policy measures. In sum, we are very much behind SCI's early communication that 'social change can't wait' and as agendas shift so quickly, we need to balance the need for self-care and quickly getting ready to respond.
