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Children Left Behind by Labour Migration: Supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian Transnational Families in the EU (“CASTLE”)

Policy Brief





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Executive summary

Children Left Behind by Labour Migration' is a 30-month action that aims to support the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in improving their child protection frameworks and policies regarding migration and mobility, with a focus on the social and legal impacts of labour migration on transnational families. The project addresses the situation of children left behind (CLB) as a result of their parents leaving abroad for work, and approaches this issue from the perspective of children's rights and the ways in which these rights are created, observed and enforced in a transnational family context. Ensuring the rights of children is one of the strategic directions of improving the activities of the state, to promote and ensure human rights and freedoms.

Labour migration is a widespread phenomenon in Eastern European countries. Most migrant families whose members participated in the field-research conducted by CASTLE come from communities where it is very common for households to have at least one adult abroad for work. As a result, local communities perceive migration as a familiar phenomenon, and the absence of at least one parent in families with children is a frequent occurrence.

The policy brief at hand advances an introduction to the issue of CLB by labor migration and a concise discussion of the preliminary findings of research conducted within the CASTLE action. The description of research results is followed by a list of evidence-based public policy recommendations.

The text of this document is based on contributions by the research teams of CASTLE academic partners, namely the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova and the Ukrainian Institute for Social Research after Olexandr Yaremenko.

This policy brief has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union, contracted by ICMPD through the Migration Partnership Facility: ICMPD/2021/MPF-357-004. The contents of this article are the sole responsibility of the Babeş-Bolyai University and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union or ICMPD.



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Introduction

Transnational families (TNFs) are a functional category of families, with their own specificities and rights entitlements. Therefore, they need to be inquired, empowered, their life-world observed and addressed from a multitude of perspectives and in a diversity of intersections, such as: minority status of various kinds including ethnic and non-regular families, children as a vulnerable group, trafficking, divorce, gender, poverty etc. Indeed, the practices of transnational family life reflect beyond its area proper, towards other social structures such as local communities, kin-like and friendly ties, organizations, workplace, education, the political community and society as a whole. These dynamics need to be addressed departing from the intimate experience of transnational family life through its perception and recognition in its local, societal and political context to the institutional capabilities needed to empower and protect its integrity and functionality.

Labour migration among citizens from Eastern Europe to the European Union has steadily increased over the past decade. Economic hardships and the search for higher living standards have led numerous Moldovan and Ukrainian citizens to seek employment on a permanent or seasonal basis in the European Union. While certain families migrate as a unit, many children remain left behind by one or both of their parents/caregivers, resulting in the growing phenomenon of TNFs. According to the latest available official data, in Moldova, 21 percent of children (150,000) have at least one parent living abroad, while 5 percent of children (35,000) have both parents abroad, whereas in Ukraine, under conditions of presumable under-reporting, 200,000 children are left behind by at least one parent, a phenomenon affecting up to 25 percent of all children in certain regions.

Against this background, the general objective of the CASTLE project is to support the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in improving their protection frameworks related to and knowledge of TNFs in the context of the social and legal impacts of labor migration to the European Union.



Research overview

CASTLE addresses stay-behind children’s situation in the context of migration, acknowledging that many aspects of migration that come into play cannot be easily tackled. However, precisely because migration is a complex phenomenon that often results in creating vulnerabilities and sensitive contexts, our endeavor seeks to provide a voice for CLB and for their families. While calling attention to pressing issues and the need for support, CASTLE seeks to highlight family practices that may function as examples for further dissemination.

Beside desk research (social-scientific literature and legal / policy context of TNFs), recommendations in this policy brief are based on data collected by field-research conducted in the three countries:

- 102 interviews with family members: parents /caregivers who stayed in the home country, children left in the home country, migrant parents
- 10 focus groups with family members, of which 5 focus group sessions with children
- 24 interviews with experts from authorities, institutions, NGOs, working with transnational family members

Family member interviews/focus groups have been conducted in approximately equal amounts by the 3 national teams. The interviewees/FG participants were Moldovan and Ukrainian TNFs with at least one parent abroad in the EU for a significant amount of time during the recent past. The research teams also conducted interviews with experts from the three countries. Most interviews have been conducted online (Facebook messenger, Zoom, WhatsApp, Viber, etc.), adapting the conversation language to respondents’ linguistic abilities or preferences (Ukrainian, Russian, Romanian, Hungarian).

		Republic of Moldova	Romania	Ukraine
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS (126)				
Family members	Adults (migrants and caregivers)	50		26
	Minors (stay behind)	12		14
Experts		11	10	3
FOCUS GROUPS (10)				
Family members	Adults (migrants and caregivers)	2 FG sessions(13)		2 FG sessions(11)
Family members	Young adults with one parent/both parents abroad	1 FG session(7)		
Family members	Children	3 FG sessions(16)		2 FG sessions(13)



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Research findings

The key findings are presented based on the topics identified in the literature review, legislation and field data analysis process.

A brief review of literature

The impact on migration on the family in the home country is complex, multi-channeled and context-dependent (Demurger 2015, IZA). Important mediating factors are: the reason for migration, who migrates (age and gender), duration of migration, continuity of care, relation with parents before departure, legal status/working arrangements of the migrant, transnational communication practices.

This is a discussion of benefits vs risks (or advantages vs disadvantages, positive vs negative outcomes), not of good or bad *per se*.

Benefits of parents' migration on CLB

Such benefits are: increased financial capacities, increased liberty, children more independent in their decision-making process, children's agency, resilience, and creativity in influencing caring practices in their migrant family (Lam and Yeoh 2019).

In terms of children's agency, it is integral to also view children as agents of change often involved in the migrant transnational caring context and not simply as passive recipients of migration, parenting decisions and practices (Christou and Kofman 2022). Children were very aware of the different persons catering to their needs and are able to identify and navigate the diversity of care in their daily lives (Lam and Yeoh 2019). Benefits as seen by migrant (mothers) (Juozeliūnienė and Budginaitė 2018): increased sense of autonomy, independence, and responsibility; the emigration experience brought brothers and sisters closer together, increasing the chains of support between their older and younger children, broadening of children's worldviews by engagement with children in constant travel abroad. Children perceive themselves smarter and more independent, fairly proud of their autonomy from adults, emphasizing their participation in household and work activities (Bezzi 2013).

Cebotari 2018 points out that the positive aspects of parental migration on CLB "do not necessarily negate the vulnerability of children in transnational care stemming from past research. Rather, advances in communication technologies have made the transnational lives of migrants and children significantly easier" (p. 21). Indeed, internet-based communication and new information and communication technologies (ICT) is essential in sustaining family relationships (Baldassar 2016b: 19-20) and any discussion about care towards family members that stayed in the home country cannot exist without addressing it.

Risks of parents' migration on CLB

Children who remain at home take over household tasks and sometimes children, especially girls, transform into "wives" who are responsible for the behaviour of the parent who is at home, sometimes leading to the risk of premature marriages (Report Moldova 2011). CLB are pushed toward growing up prematurely, learning to play pre-age social roles, paired with emancipation through parents treating them as their peers (Report Moldova 2011). These roles, especially looking after younger siblings, impact on their school attendance and performance.

Parents mostly view migration as a matter of family economy while invoking 'children's needs', leading to a sense of culpability may develop in children (Pantea 2011; Report Moldova 2011).



Risks are mainly connected with unmet emotional needs of CLB, such as security, affection, and safety, so they face emotional deprivation. The most likely type of harm is connected with children’s emotional and developmental wellbeing (Gheaus 2014), due to lack of emotional experiences necessary for a harmonious development of personality (Report Moldova 2011).

Parents resort to migration with a special regard for children’s economic interests (Gheaus, 2014), but co on pursuing this goal from a distance adapted to the reality of transnational practice (Juozeliūnienė and Budginaitė, 2018), facing the migration paradox: they migrate for children’s economic welfare, but often at the cost of children’s emotional wellbeing (Bryceson 2019, Lam and Yeoh 2019).

Some quantitative studies found limited differences in the well-being of children with and without migrant parents (Cebotari et al. 2018, Gassmann et al. 2017), others found significantly higher levels of anxiety and depression in the former against the latter, but similar coping strategies (Tomşa and Jenaro 2015) or a negative correlation between missing parent and self-reported mental health / well-being (Leskauskas et. al 2017). Generalizability of studies is limited; few included an appropriate control group; the complexity of intervening social factors prevent outlining a positive/negative impact of migration.

Researchers point that the public discourses about migration that emphasize merely the negative consequences on CLB must be reconsidered. The idea is “not to dismiss the possibility that parental absence through migration can erode child well-being, but to emphasize the need to understand how migration, family systems, and societal processes intersect to bolster or undermine child well-being and its various expressions and domains.” (Gassmann et al. 2017: 438).

Mediating factors: reason for migration

Increased vulnerability exists when migration is motivated by poverty, corruption and structural unemployment or underemployment in the place of origin (Gheaus 2014). Individual experiences of left behind children are strongly shaped by the family backgrounds and the socio-cultural contexts of belonging (Bezzi 2013): in some contexts negative outcomes of parental migration may be more present than in others, connected with other hardships and dysfunctions that may exist prior to migration.

Mediating factors: who migrated, how long, how soon in the life of children

Differences in impact on CLB are linked with the role of mother and father in childcare, potential traditional gender roles with the mother as primary caregiver, leading to more diversified care arrangements involving a web of carers in case she migrates (Lam and Yeoh 2019). Often, maternal grandmother takes over care of CLB as an extension of the migrant mother, reinforcing traditional gender roles with women’s continued responsibility for the care of CLB (Fan and Parrenas 2018).

The elder the child, the easier the acceptance of parents’ migration. Children feel more affected immediately after their parents’ departure, a period considered the most difficult. A decrease in emotional sensibility of the child towards parents’ absence has been noted (Report Moldova 2011).

Although the new communication technologies and the digital co-presence allow mothers to closely monitor the activity of CLB and “to perform intensive mothering at a distance” (Madianou 2016b: 83, indeed to assess children’s wellbeing through video calls as practices as ‘good’ and ‘involved’ parenting (Frenyo 2019), this poses challenges with small children or modest digital literacy of caretakers, especially grandmothers (Frenyo, 2019; Madianou, 2016b).



Mediating factors: who's the carer – continuity vs discontinuity of care

The often precarious work of migrants (seasonal agricultural work, construction, caregiving in private homes) and job opportunities on short notice, sometimes makes the departure and care arrangements for CLB insufficiently planned (Gheaus 2014). Existing support from the extended family may contribute to parents' decision to migrate. The continuity of care is highly important (Gheaus 2014, Cebotari 2018), rather than who specifically take it over. Household level coping and coordination mechanisms may act as a buffer between parental migration and CLB's wellbeing (Gassmann et al. 2017).

Children exert their agency within the web of home care, being simultaneously powerful and powerless (Lam and Yeoh 2019), while with diverse persons at home, they are constantly experimenting, adjusting, resisting and reworking plans independently. They are well aware of the different persons catering to their needs and able to identify and navigate around the diversity of care in their daily lives (Lam and Yeoh 2019). Their autonomy and role in the web of care amplifies as they grow up.

Mediating factors: transnational communication

The accelerated development of “communication technologies [is] transforming ways of ‘being together’ and forms of ‘co-presence’ in families and communities separated by distance and over time” (Baldassar et al. 2016: 134). Care becomes “a mediated emotional experience” (Alinejad 2021: 444). The internet is an environment which is crucial in providing emotional and practical support for children and other family members back home (Frenyo 2019) and for the practice of ‘digital kinning’ (Baldassar and Wilding 2020), understood as engagement with new technologies for the purpose of maintaining support networks. Through ICT-mediated ‘family practices’ (Madianou 2016a; Nedelcu and Wyss 2016) and transnational communication, families manage to obtain a co-presence among nuclear transnational family members (Ducu 2014, 2018, Madianou 2016b).

Migration today takes place in a polymedia environment that offers a great variety of new media and ICT to facilitate family practices (Madianou and Miller 2012; Madianou 2016b) and various types of co-presence or ‘being there’ for each other (Baldassar 2016b). Virtual co-presence, mediated through ICT, is different but not less real than physical co-presence (Baldassar 2016b). The polymedia environment allows family members to be in touch instantaneously and in real time (Baldassar 2016a: 160). Through ‘ordinary co-presence’ (Nedelcu and Wyss 2016), migrants and their parents in home countries achieve “a subtle sense of each other’s everyday life [and] a feeling of being and doing things together” (2016: 216), and a transnational everyday reality emerges (2016). Another form, ‘ambient co-presence’ (Madianou 2016a), is not based on direct interactions but on the peripheral awareness of the actions of distant others through polymedia environments (2016a: 186), soothing distant family members through each other’s regular routines being followed (2016a: 191). The constancy of ambient co-presence may however lead to tensions (2016a: 195), as changes in routines may indicate that something is wrong.

Achieving different types of co-presence and ensuring care from a distance require certain resources and capabilities – financial/material to afford new technologies, knowledge to use them, as well as time availability for permanent communication with family members in home country. Certainly, not all the families enjoy the conditions of polymedia (Baldassar, 2016b: 30; Frenyo, 2019). Among the most disadvantaged are lower-socio-economic families, persons who may not be as familiar with using new media (e.g. elderly), refugees. However, migrants are among the early and enthusiastic adopters of new technologies to maintain transnational family relationships (Madianou 2016b: 76).



The access to ICT enables CLB “to exercise their agency in initiating and shaping the flow of transnational communication” (Acedera and Yeoh 2021: 187) and to fulfill their right to participate in decisions. Cheap communication technologies and internet allow children to develop coping strategies to overcome their challenging circumstances (Nazridod 2019). The agency of children without their own electronic devices is heavily constrained, as they have disadvantaged positions in the hierarchy of care; although the communication with their parents is frequent, they have a rather passive role in their care arrangements (Acedera and Yeoh 2021), with difficulties in enjoying ambient co-presence (2021). Then, another form of co-presence emerges: ‘imaginary co-presence’ (Robertson et al. 2016), not synchronous in time and space, rather an imagined one, based on a shared past, documented by photographs (2016: 231).

ICT mediated provision of care is clearly a reality of the present world, and much more so in mobility and migration contexts. Care moves across transnational spaces, is carried out in different spheres and at different care sites, which delineates its portability (Huang et al. 2012). Under these circumstances, the call for “de-demonizing distance, or at least removing the assumption that distance is implicitly a barrier to care exchange” (Baldassar 2016: 161a) and, we may add, to children’s rights fulfillment, appear as self-explanatory.

ICT facilitate a ‘connected presence” (Licoppe, 2004) of different groups, not only of family members, and wider social networks experience a ‘digital togetherness’ (Marino, 2015). Besides portability of family care, ICT use allow the “portability of the networks of belonging” (Diminescu 2008: 573) and maintenance of social relations with those at home. Moreover, new media allow a connectiveness with migrants with the same origin, hence with the country of origin and its culture (Sinanan and Horst, 2022). On the other hand, involvement in online networks and communities contribute to migrants’ empowerment as they interact with each other, increasing their feeling of belonging to a group, making the integration process in the local community easier and less traumatic (Marino, 2015).

Mediating factors: relation with parents before departure

The situations that children have to confront are very different depending on the stability of the pre-existing family network at the parents’ departure (Bezzi 2013). In case of existing conflicts, migration can amplify existing tensions in the pre-existing web of care (Lam and Yeoh 2019). These relate to the issue of continuity of care.

The impact of new communication technologies on transnational family life depends on the previous quality of the relationships. When this is good, polymedia environment allows care from a distance and being there for each other, while existing difficulties and conflicts could be brought to surface and even accentuated (Baldassar et al., 2016; Madianou, 2016b). A downside of this ‘always on’ culture that is facilitated by new communication technologies is that it makes visible problems or conflicts that could have been kept out of sight in the past (Madianou 2016b).

Mediating factors: Legal status/working arrangements of the migrant

Beyond internet access (cheap subscription may be conditioned by an official residence), the degree of informality of working arrangements of the migrants (especially mothers that work as domestic and care workers), with little enforcement of labor protection laws, may pose increasing difficulties on the regularity and synchronicity of contacts with children left at home (Baldassar, 2016b; Frenyo, 2019; Greschke 2021). Rapidly changing working hours or sharing an apartment with several other persons are both additional obstacles that migrants may face in communication with family members (Greschke 2021).



Remarks on relevant legislation and policies

Besides international documents relevant to cross-border circulation of migrants, child protection and child rights including EU legislation on migration, left-behind children and family reunification, a number of national legislation and policy entries in the beneficiary countries and Romania (as a sample of both sending and receiving EU country) have importance in our context.

Overall, challenges have been signaled related to the legislative and policy framework, its potential sources and structure, its application, and especially to the awareness of existing legislation and trust towards enforcing institutions, as well as to the non-EU status of the beneficiary countries.

Republic of Moldova

The first time when the national legislation addressed the issue of children left without parental care, as a result of their parents' migration abroad was in 2008. There are a number of relevant provisions within the national legislation, others are part of international normative acts ratified by the Republic of Moldova; additional provisions stem from human rights conventions to which the Republic of Moldova adhered as a members of the Council of Europe (since 1995).

Ukraine

The issue of labor migrants' children has been addressed repeatedly in Ukraine, since mid-2000s, becoming a salient topic on the public agenda. Beginning with 2016, the law "On external labor migration" specifically mentions, for the first time, the children of labor migrants and their rights.

While the generally weak enforcement of the relevant legislation and policy signaled an important advancement, its outline fails to address a number of important issues, which hinders its ability to fully cover the complex phenomenon of CLB.

Romania

In our context, Romania presents a two-folded status: as a sending country in the context of EU-level labor migration and (more recently) a destination country for migration from outside the EU. Among relevant provisions, there are those on the residence and employment of foreigners; protection of children whose parents are abroad for work; migrant parents' rights in the countries of destination.

The dynamic regional political context - the EU mechanism of temporary protection

The ongoing situation generated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine exerted a rapid response on the part of the European Union, leading to, among others, the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive also having relevance for safeguarding children's rights and well-being.



Primary analysis of field research

(1) *The situation and views of children in the context of migration*

Depending on personal circumstances, migrant workers and their children expressed different visions of their future. Some of them perceive employment abroad as a forced, temporary step, seeking to return to Ukraine if possible; others are focused on integration into the host country and plan to reunite, in the destination society, with the family members who stayed in Ukraine. Children are mostly just told about, but not involved in parents' decisions related to migration; however, they all passively contribute through understanding and accepting adult arguments, which are mostly economic, while strongly undergoing a feeling of loss. As a consequence, they acquire increased self-management, mutual support among siblings and peers and actively participate in the family through additional contributions to the household and even support given to adults, including the migrant parent(s). Compared with adults, children and youth see leaving and staying in a more nuanced, open and fluid manner and are often covertly critical of them, seeing migration as apparently not necessary or one that should be limited by a certain goal to a certain amount of time.

(2) *Relationship with caregivers*

Overall, relationships with those in the environment improve due to necessity; however, an effort is made to keep the caregiver role as it is ("you cannot replace a person"), however, recognition is given to their effort and to the difficulty of their multiple roles. The caregivers may become role models, or on the contrary, abusers (psychologically or legally), or offering deficient care. With the departure of even one of the parents abroad, the child receives less attention not only because of parental absence, but also because of the increasing burden on the parents who remained home. The problem of upbringing and care is complicated when children reach adolescence, when they especially need assuring communication and supervision from older family members. Some children of older migrant workers are left alone with adult problems and have to deal with them on their own. In Ukraine, significant assistance to children of migrant workers left without proper supervision is provided by state institutions and public organizations - representatives of local self-government, social services, charitable foundations and religious communities.

(3) *Youth activities, compensation strategies, support groups*

Overall: children and youth report that a majority of families in their environment have at least one migrant adult, this being the absolute normalcy, hence mutual acceptance or support is natural. Lack of knowledge and distrust prevail when it comes to rights, laws or institutions/organizations (including the state) who might support them or their families. Most importantly, the belonging, the accomplishments and rootedness provided by peer groups - organized around hobbies, sports, cultural events etc. - has been highlighted: while one cannot compensate for a parent's absence, they need to build self-esteem and personal embedding through others. Migrant children, regardless of whether one or both parents are abroad, tend to attend school. In regions where the departure of parents to earn money is common (Western Ukraine), such children do not feel any special attitude from peers or teachers. In areas where such cases are rare (for example, Kharkiv region), children of migrant workers report feeling perceived differently by others.

(4) *Transnational relationships and communication*



Speaking about the peculiarities of the relationship with a missing family member, respondents mentioned cases of significant alienation of children from their parents, the destruction of trusting relationships and increasing mutual distancing. Overall, the transnational communication is consistent and relies heavily on having access to Internet. Generally, there is a high degree of co-presence and interest, sometimes group communication or through third persons (adult at home); Children use Internet as information sources, since their parents are not immediately available to them for asking questions. In a number of cases, long-distance communication also happens with the school of the child.

In some cases, previously dysfunctional relations improved due to distance and to the “value of time together”, but in some cases, online communication degenerated into addiction, or non-communication itself was the subject of communication. Using the Internet to navigate their daily existence is commonplace in the lives of many migrants; at the same time, a certain caution is practiced, some of the online information being reckoned as unreliable. Accordingly, verifying the information by directly talking to people is a common strategy. For children, using smartphones for reaching their absent parents can improve their communication skills; at the same time, some parents mentioned the difficulties with controlling online content consumed by adolescent children.

(4a) Access to Internet & technology

Ukrainian and Moldavian labor migrants, not being EU citizens, do not enjoy free roaming services and mobile Internet from the home country, while the entitlement to an advantageous Internet subscription in the destination country is not easy to obtain. Some of them are dependent on the wi-fi networks from the accommodation, a fact that restricts the availability of the migrant parent for their children at home. Our result identified that members from TNFs encounter *limits in online communication for doing family*. Sometimes the quality of the connection is poor and they rely on voice calls only, unable to use the video options. Virtual communication, especially when it does not rely on a solid history of the relationship, cannot fully replace face-to-face interactions and might create distorted expectations and representations of the other. Physical and virtual co-presence is not the same and children sense these differences, although they acknowledge the huge improvement ICT brought in communication.

(5) Migration and family issues

Some of the issues involved are:

- migration motivated by the severe illness of a child;
- divorce after starting migration with severe consequences for the child;
- single mothers forced to migrate without taking their children along;
- economic difficulties paired with singleness of a parent lead to situations almost impossible to manage;
- lack of a strong social embedding leaves families in crisis with no functional support;
- gendered stigmatization of migrant mothers puts a strain on transnational relationships to the point of divorce
- migrant parents' difficulties in adapting to living conditions in another country and "reverse adapting" when returning.



Recommendations

Note: recommendations within each category are ordered from urgent / short-term to essential / long-term

Legislative recommendations:

- To refine and promote the law on guardianship and temporary custody;
- Simplification and acceleration of the institutional process for orderly departure, including digitalization of bi-directional institutional communication (access and response) and of decision-making;
- Creating a dedicated institutional body to process (full, temporary or partial) delegation of parental authority in order to streamline the process and avoid reluctance towards traditional judicial forums;
- Creating a legal instrument of “hybrid” co-guardianship, whereby the migrant parent exercises authority, responsibility, and full participation in communication, monitoring, decisions, and significant events within children's lives from a distance, in partnership with the stay-behind parent or caregiver who represents and complements his/her presence, without replacing it;
- At the international level, the creation of legislative frameworks to make it easier for minor children to travel abroad for visits to their migrant parents.

Recommendations for institutions and organizations:

- ✚ To organize experience exchange meetings for community representatives who have established successful work with TNFs;
- ✚ To create awareness-raising campaigns for acknowledging the TNFs phenomenon, to initiate constructive interest and dialogue, and prevent the bullying of migrants' children;
- ✚ To encourage the direct involvement of transnational family members and children in communication, administrative and research initiatives that concern them;
- ✚ Specialized training in migration and TNFs, including legislation, data, practices, and policies should be provided for professionals dealing with TNFs with children: this can start in the very short term with training courses, then in the long term with MA or postgraduate courses;
- ✚ To assign trained specialists in regional social service centers for families, children, and youth;
- ✚ Institutions to initiate partnership with beneficiaries through community information meetings and communication on social networks;
- ✚ Campaigns should be organized to promote the partnership where beneficiaries themselves present success stories;
- ✚ For the credibility of the initiative, reliable and up-to-date online information and a consistent openness to real-time digital communication must be provided;
- ✚ To set up databases and joint international contacts on TNFs, accessible to all institutional stakeholders

Recommendations for actions facilitating transnational togetherness of families:

- ✓ Awareness-raising and training campaigns on children's participation in transparent and functional transnational communication;



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- ✓ Employers in target countries to be incentivized to offer convenient phone/internet packages and time/flexibility of connectivity within working hours;
- ✓ To facilitate regular visits (minimum 3 full days together every 3 months) between home and destination country through paid days off and travel vouchers offered by employers or authorities.
- ✓ Setting up community centers that facilitate the online communication for TNFs with limited access to internet
- ✓ Provision of quality audio/video communication kits and internet access for families in need, at least in the early stages (3-6 months) of migration, similar to the approach used during the pandemic period;

Recommendations concerning national programs for TNFs:

- ❖ Creation of online platforms where children can express themselves, share their concerns and provide reciprocal support in groups moderated and monitored by public authorities, educational institutions, NGOs, which also collect anonymous data on issues to be fed back to research;
- ❖ Training programs for family members left at home, including caregivers, extended family, grandparents and supportive families;
- ❖ Creation of "transnational parent/ caregiver clubs" where they can share experiences, support, problems, and solutions;
- ❖ Organize psychological support for transnational family members, training in methods of preventing and overcoming crisis situations;
- ❖ Telephone hotline or online chat where TNFs, including children, can seek advice or assistance;
- ❖ Create a digital resource called "Transnational Family Advisor" with a summary of legal, domestic and other information that can be useful for migrant workers and families, with systematic answers.
- ❖ Emergency economic intervention packages for TNFs for economic, medical or legal crisis situations, with special focus on single-parent families and chronically ill children;



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Co-funded by
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