

**Children Left Behind by Labour Migration:
supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian
Transnational Families in the EU (CASTLE)
ICMPD / 2021 / MPF-357-004**


Closing Report
(NOVEMBER, 2023)

Edit 

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Executive summary

The CASTLE action “aims to support the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in improving their child protection frameworks and migration and mobility policies, with a focus on the social and legal impacts of labour migration on transnational families. The action analyses the situation of children left behind by their parents who engaged or are engaging in labour migration from the perspective of their rights and possibly within transnational family practices that create, observe and enforce such rights. For this purpose, the intervention aims to develop a multigenerational, intersectional and participative qualitative analysis of child rights in a transnational family context.”

During two years and a half (June 2021–November 2023) the main activities of the action plan were successfully achieved by all the research teams from the three countries: Babeş-Bolyai University (Romania), Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova (ASEM) and Ukrainian Institute for Social Research, but also by the NGOs partners: Terre des Hommes–Terre des Hommes delegation Romania, Terre des Hommes Moldova and Terre des Hommes Ukraine.

The aim of this in-depth closing report is to highlight the results of the action research including all the publications following data collection and the findings, some of them already included in the ‘Opening Report’. As previously mentioned, the methodology has primarily relied on semi-structured interviews led by category-specific interview guides based on the analysis of the relevant literature and the demands of the project at hand, complemented by focus-groups with family member categories led by guides incorporating feedback from the former.

Coordinates of the fieldwork

Temporal: In-depth interviews with family members of migrant workers: November–December 2021; Focus groups with parents and children: April–May 2022; In-depth interviews with experts: May 2022. Part of a 2-stage data collection process involving a quantitative stage: May 2023, and a qualitative stage: July–August 2023, but also co-researcher capacity building, consultation and co-research.

Numerical:

- 126 interviews with family members—stayer parent/caregiver, stayer child, migrant parent;
- 10 focus-groups with family members, of which 5 with children;
- 24 interviews with experts from authorities, institutions, NGOs, working with transnational family members family member interviews/focus-groups have been collected by the 3 national teams (Ro, Mo, Ua) with Moldovan and Ukrainian transnational families with at least one parent abroad in the EU a significant amount of time during the recent past expert interviews have been taken by the 3 teams, with Mo and UA as well as Ro experts, a large majority of interviews have been taken online (Facebook messenger, Zoom, WhatsApp, Viber, etc.). The languages were Ukrainian, Russian and Romanian, and in one case, Hungarian;
- 207 respondents to the survey.

The Closing Report seeks to present in the first part, the research results as contributions published by each academic partners from the three countries involved in the CASTLE action, but also in the second section, the awareness-raising campaigns, capacity building, dissemination, policy frameworks, etc., activities that were implemented by NGOs partners in each country: TdH Romania, TdH Moldova and TdH Ukraine.

Overview of the research results

A total of **16 contributions** (15 articles and 1 chapter) were either published, or sent for evaluation to different journals from researchers directly involved in our research from the three countries.

In order to reach the main goal of our research, more specifically, to function as the voice of beneficiary groups—stay-behind children and their families, we incorporated in our publications the most important issues, specific needs, effects of labour migration on CLB, children’s rights and opinions, education, calls for support, family practices, but also recommendation and solutions.

We discussed how transnational parents represent their children by engaging in digital communication practices with institutions and maintaining family togetherness through involvement and support of children within transnational family relationships. We found that communication with institutions is burdened by distrust of and constraints regarding information and communication technologies (ICT) access, the limited availability of adults as interlocutors for daily communication, and deliberate non-transparency of communication at both ends.

Then, we evaluated the level of trust and we have presented all the sections to best capture practices that illustrate the presence of a certain degree of stigmatisation of parents

in transnational families. We identified that fact that the inventory of all the stakeholders' attitudes shows the highest ambivalence conflating parental migration with abandonment. This characteristic of attitudes illustrates the considerable pressure placed on transnational families by society, representatives of the authorities, and by members of the immediate social environment by the family and the community. From our point of view, trust can be increased by: support measures aimed to support, not intervene in the family, positive interaction and efficient communication with representatives of institutions, transparency, less bureaucracy and more information on rights.

Another important contribution focused on four case studies of particularly difficult situations that Moldovan or Ukrainian families face—serious illness of a child left at home (two cases), Covid 19 lockdown, and war in Ukraine—and we showed how the insufficient resources and social support in their direct environment pushes these families to employ new, dynamic, indeed radical strategies to address their difficulties through enlarging and navigating their resource environment.

We also analysed the reality of today's national social policies in Moldova and Romania and we found that the measures of public authorities and NGOs are associated with their tendency to propose transnational welfare practices. With national policies relatively lacking in specifically targeting migration, Romania and Moldova are lagging behind in the development of the idea of welfare practices across borders. The tendency of public entities to plead for possible agreements, communication, monitoring and support relations between states is found in our results.

We studied the school-related practices and perceptions in Moldovan and Ukrainian transnational families, and discussed parents' and children's perspectives on the challenges that parental migration generates for children's school performance and activities.

Moreover, we included the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war and compared the external migration features before and after the start of the full-scale invasion, but also the attitude towards them problems of caring for children in migrant families, the peculiarities of realising children's right to education, communications and relationships in migrant families in this context.

Not least, we came up with contributions on research methodological aspects on the transnational families and CLB topics such as conducting focus groups interviews or the involvement of left-behind adolescents as co-researchers in the study of transnational families.

Implementation results

Important results achieved by Terre des hommes (Tdh) Moldova, Tdh Ukraine, and Tdh Romania.

The CASTLE project has made significant strides in addressing the potential negative impact of labour migration policies on the protection of children in Moldova, Ukraine, and Romania. This comprehensive report outlines the progress made in achieving specific objectives related to research, policy frameworks, capacity building, awareness campaigns, and media sensitization.

Specific Objective 1: The potentially negative impact of labour migration policies and dynamics on the protection of children in Moldova and Ukraine is understood thanks to solution-oriented research structures.

In Moldova, Terre des hommes (Tdh) actively supported the ASEM Research Team, involving child co-researchers in workshops and focus groups. This initiative empowered children and contributed valuable insights to policymakers. In Romania, an International Conference disseminated research findings, policy recommendations, and practical implementations. Webinars explored challenges faced by transnational families, offering a nuanced understanding of family dynamics, social protection, and educational adaptations.

Specific Objective 2: Legal and policy frameworks impacting labour migration in Moldova and Ukraine are improved based on solid empirical research evidence, including in relation to circular and temporary labour migration. Moldova enhanced its legislative framework regarding custody for children left behind through Government Decision No. 81. This aims to provide stability, security, and a nurturing environment for children temporarily separated due to migration. Policy advice sessions in Moldova and Ukraine informed policymakers on child protection issues related to labour migration, emphasising collaborative efforts.

Specific Objective 3: Transnational families and national stakeholders are better informed on the realities and practical issues related to labour migration.

The CASTLE project conducted comprehensive training initiatives for transnational families in Moldova and Ukraine. These sessions covered essential topics such as migration concepts, reasons behind migration decisions, and guidance on childcare arrangements. The sharing of good practices through conferences in Moldova, Romania, and Lisbon fostered collaboration among key stakeholders and enriched the understanding of challenges faced by children left behind.

Specific Objective 4: Children left behind and their families from Moldova and Ukraine are empowered to contribute to legal and policy reform on labour migration, with an emphasis on circular migration schemes and protection of children.

The project's awareness-raising campaign used participatory methods to engage communities. In Moldova, Ukraine, and Romania, policy advice sessions, research dissemination,

and interactive materials development empowered transnational families. The project aimed to contribute to legal and policy reform on labour migration, emphasising circular migration schemes and the protection of children.

In conclusion, the CASTLE's multi-faceted approach, including research, policy advocacy, capacity building, awareness campaigns, and media sensitization, demonstrates a holistic strategy to address the complex challenges faced by transnational families in the context of labour migration. The collaborative efforts across Moldova, Ukraine, and Romania have contributed to a more informed and supportive environment for children left behind and their families.

Research results

In this section we will describe the contributions that have been published or are in the process of being published by the research teams of each of the three countries: Romania, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, but also a common special issue edited by one of Babeş-Bolyai team researchers: Mihaela Hărăguş. Most of the contributions are open access and include all the results and recommendations that we worked on during the CASTLE research activities. These can also be found in policy briefs that are public and in the Opening Report that describes in detail the relevant literature identified on transnational families, methodological aspects and the most important results on various analysis sections.

1.

Country results: Romania

1.1 Asserting children's rights through the digital practices of transnational families

<https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12828>

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We have investigated the way several rights stipulated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are observed in the context of children left behind through parents' labour migration. Parental migration implies changes in the circumstances of a family's life and consequently, in the way parents and children interact.

Under the accelerated development of communication technologies, family practices in transnational families take place through digital communication, in different forms of virtual co-presence. Children's right to family, contact, care, supervision, protection, home, safety, and physical and emotional well-being, each under the principle of the best interests of the child, are obvious segments where children's life is affected by transnational digital family practices.

In this context, stay-behind children manifest their agency in various ways: through the experiences of care provision, through coping with their stay-behind life, through initiating communication with migrant parents, or through actively getting involved in obtaining information about parents' conditions or disclosing information about their own lives.

We have shown how in the context of digital communication, Moldovan and Ukrainian transnational families manage to perform "doing rights" for their children both internally (at the micro level, within the family) and externally (at the meso-macro level, or outside the family) through creating or potentially constraining family togetherness. In doing so, we focused on the process through which parents in transnational families fulfil their parental responsibilities, even from a distance, in prioritising the best interests of their children.

We first explored an external rights-related aspect: how the virtual environment facilitates or hinders migrant parents' actions in their relationship with institutions and authorities. We found that using the internet to navigate the complexities of their daily existence is commonplace in the lives of many migrants. However, for various reasons such as lack of skills or perceived unreliability of internet information sources, often parents prefer to go and ask directly, or to call the relevant authorities and verify the information.

The main part of our findings addresses rights aspects internal to the family itself, namely, how parents and children act co-agentically in managing transnational life. The new communication technologies and the ambient copresence, when it is achievable, allow parents to supervise and assess children's well-being back home. Interactions between migrant parents and stay-behind children are shaped by access to communication technologies and by parents' work conditions and schedule. The non-EU status of Ukraine and Moldova and the lack of mobile telephony agreements makes unlimited access to international phone calls difficult. Additionally, the nature of the work performed by Ukrainian and Moldovan migrant parents does not allow many of them to enjoy a permanent connectivity with and availability for their family members at home. Long working hours, hard work, and internet access confined to their accommodation make being in touch instantaneously and in real time hard to achieve. Not being constantly or consistently available for communication with their children hampers children's opportunities to initiate transnational communications. New ICTs certainly make distance and migrant parents' endeavours more bearable, but virtual and physical co-presence are still not interchangeable in the case of Ukrainian and Moldovan transnational families, where the degree of limitation in creating copresence routines is not negligible.

Essential for understanding children's participation in digital transnational family practices is the analysis of the transparency of communication—which interlocutors don't always respect. The geographical distance and the time limits of possible communication, the relative scantiness of communication channels, and the lack of perspective and control over the other end of the line make the comfort and openness of the connection significantly more fragile in transnational families and hence, more valuable. Both parents and children perceive keeping secrets as a practice of caring in the sense of "protecting them from trouble" but it may defy its purpose by depriving the party in question of essential support. By limiting the information disclosed, both parents and children implicitly exclude each other from possible family consultation and decisions, thereby limiting their participation in family life.

Based on our analysis, several recommendations for enhancing children's participation in digital communication, as promoting family togetherness, have been made, such as: free online communication centres in areas in need, provision of communication kits, and investment in the telecommunication infrastructure, convenient phone and internet access packages offered by employers, support for periodic mutual visits.

1.2 “Not like everyone else?” Transnational families’s relationship with their home society between stigma and dialogue

<https://doi.org/10.15407/socium2023.01.054>

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In the literature dealing with migration issues, researchers have addressed the negative perceptions towards parents who migrate and leave their children in the care of others. As studies have shown, the attitudes present in public discourse towards transnational family members are often negative (Parreñas 2001, 2005; Piperno 2007; Solari 2008; Tolstokorova 2008, 2009; Ducu 2013; Cojocaru, Islam & Timofte 2015). Regarding the interest of our endeavour, focused on the situation of parents in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, recent studies show that the public discourses about migration that emphasise merely the negative consequences on children left behind (CLB) must be reconsidered (Cojocaru *et al.*, 2015). Approaching the situation of children with migrant parents exclusively from the perspective of ‘social orphans’, a syntagm that has dominated the Ukrainian media in particular, is inadequate and fails to open the door to a real dialog between stakeholders, transnational families and authorities. Similarly, in Moldova, studies and consultative reports carried out by a number of NGO organisations (e.g., UNICEF) have largely focused on children from vulnerable communities, which has contributed to the construction of a negative discourse against transnational families. This image almost completely ignores the contemporary realities of family existence, which are often to a large extent interconnected with migration and care systems (Vanore 2015, 118).

The present study discusses whether and how Ukrainian and Moldovan migrant parents, some of whom had to leave their children behind in the care of other adults, are faced with a disapproving public discourse, while also facing a strong pressure both in their relationship with the public authorities and at the level of society, community, and family. Through this approach we aim to answer the following question: *Are members of Ukrainian and Moldavian transnational families subject to a process of stigmatisation at the level of society but also at the level of their immediate social environment?* In this view, we develop a qualitative enquiry based on in-depth interviews with respondents from Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. Our main research objective is to examine the attitudes encountered by members of transnational families in society, in their relations with the

representatives of the authorities, as well as in their close social environment, community, and family. Specific research topics are explored, such as: reasons for migration, trust in public authorities, local community, migrants' community, and trust in the host country's state and society, the attitudes towards the most important key stakeholders involved in the migration process, as well as the support measures proposed by migrants and their families. The findings concerning the attitudes, level of trust and proposals suggest the presence of a certain degree of stigmatisation of parents from transnational families. Our study underlines the need for transnational transfer of good practices and real-life experiences, such as those of migrants, in order not to remain an empty imitation. This experience can only be transferred through dialogue, trust and acceptance—which is not the case at the time of our research. Therefore, it is imperative to continue dialogue-based fieldwork with primary stakeholders, the families themselves, in order to deconstruct and prospectively avoid the structural construction of stigma.

1.3 Left-Behind Adolescent Co-researchers' Participation in Studying Transnational Families

<https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80455-526-220231011>

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The article discusses the phenomenon of transnational families, where some family members live in another country due to work, while the family maintains a sense of unity and welfare. In countries like Romania, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, labour migration is a significant issue. For example, in the Republic of Moldova, a quarter of the population lives abroad, leading to a separation of parents from their children, especially in rural areas. In Ukraine, millions of people worked abroad prior to Russia's invasion in 2021. Migrant parents are often criticised for neglecting their left-behind children, who are sometimes labelled as “social orphans.” Media coverage has highlighted extreme cases, but research shows a more nuanced impact, with different responses within families and communities. Parental migration has complex effects on family dynamics, roles, responsibilities, and children's well-being. Other research outcomes generally indicate negative effects on the mental health of left-behind children, including anxiety, depression, health

issues, risk-taking behaviour, and increased exposure to violence. These children are considered vulnerable due to temporary separation from parental care, leading to emotional costs. However, some studies in Eastern Europe have found no significant differences in the well-being of left-behind children.

Insufficient research on this phenomenon in Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine has focused on children's well-being from a care-oriented perspective, often viewing them as social orphans. Children's voices and opinions are rarely considered in decisions related to migration within transnational families, as adults underestimate their competence.

Involving children as co-researchers is essential in understanding their roles as agents of change within their societies and communities, particularly in the context of childhood and its interaction with society's structures and cultures. This approach acknowledges that children are experts in their own life experiences and have the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Co-research empowers children to actively engage in an epistemological research process, utilising their networks to access peers or key people, generating unique content through peer conversations, and facilitating listening to different perspectives on the same subject. The primary objective of including children as co-researchers is to uncover their views and behaviours concerning their daily challenges, encompassing various roles, including subjects, participants, and data producers. This approach is crucial when studying social problems from children's perspectives, emphasising the need to consider their subjectivity, agency, power, and influence, and involving them from the project's inception. In the context of studies addressing issues related to left-behind children due to parental labour migration, children's involvement as co-researchers is particularly vital, given their exclusion from the migration decision-making process as indicated by empirical data.

A participatory research design was adopted, emphasising the inclusion of all group members and a rights-based approach. The project's objective is to hear the voices of children, ensuring their input is shared with policymakers to guide policies and practices. Ethical considerations were central, respecting human dignity, focusing on utility and benefit, taking precautions to protect participants from harm, and ensuring justice through fair remuneration. Co-researchers were recruited based on specific criteria and consent, with the team comprising adolescents from the Republic of Moldova studying in Romania, who had experienced being left behind due to parental labour migration. Their involvement throughout the research process was integral to the project's success.

The results and discussion of the research involving teenage co-researchers are presented in six stages: preparatory work, research design, recruitment, data collection, analysis and interpretation, and dissemination. Preparatory work involved continuous training for co-researchers and professional support, with the training focusing on six modules covering various aspects of the research process. The research design phase included discussions

on research topics and the interview guide, with adolescent co-researchers actively participating. The recruitment of study participants involved collaboration between researchers and co-researchers in reaching out to potential interviewees.

Data collection encompassed individual interviews, family interviews, and focus groups, with the adolescent co-researchers having the option to be involved in various aspects of the interviews. The analysis and interpretation of data were carried out in collaboration with seven of the co-researchers, highlighting key findings related to the parent-child relationship and the impact of parental migration on adolescents.

In the dissemination phase, the co-researchers are actively involved in developing information materials for children, parents, and caregivers in transnational families. They are also contributing to draft recommendations for supporting transnational families and left-behind children. The research experience has empowered the co-researchers, making them feel valuable and proud of their contributions. They emphasise the importance of helping others and making a positive impact. Their involvement has also helped researchers maintain sensitivity to children's experiences and perspectives, with the project continuing to use child-adapted participatory methods despite some criticism from experts. The co-researchers' insights have led to discussions on improving communication between parents and children and the roles of parents and teenagers in transnational families.

Concluding dilemmas and challenges in the study of parental migration and its effects on the family environment involve the evolving perspective on children and parents in such situations, with evidence from adolescent co-researchers revealing a more nuanced understanding of the impact. The main challenge faced was maintaining the interest and involvement of young co-researchers, who were not inclined to participate in the data collection phase. Possible reasons for this reluctance include their need for more training or their preference for making their voices heard without direct involvement in interviews. A question arises about whether to pressure co-researchers to participate more actively or respect their decision as a form of democratic collaboration. The study adheres to the principle of adapting to the needs of co-researchers.

1.4 Local and transnational participation of families with stay-behind children in the hybrid transnational social protection nexus

Note. Under evaluation in Special Issue edited within the project by Viorela Ducu, Áron Telegdi-Csetri, Julia Rone, ‘Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay’, *Journal for Ethnic and Migration Studies*.

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Under continuous economic difficulties that extended well beyond the transition period, a high number of individuals in Moldova and Ukraine had no other option for improving the economic prospects of their families than to temporarily migrate for work, while leaving their children behind. In this sense, migration is a form of social protection, as migrants pool together resources in destination and home countries. In this context, transnational families are agents of protection for vulnerable members (children left at home), trying to collect the elements of social protection they can access when needed from the resource environment they have (or don't have) at hand in different countries.

Migration appears as a solution for fulfilling basic needs, when the salary from low paid and unregulated jobs cover food expenses only, and people must figure out ways of supplementing their income. Their employment abroad is sometimes on short term contracts or include periods of irregular labour, and usually do not qualify for public social protection in the destination country, so they must rely on other sources of social protection. In several cases of crisis, such as the Covid pandemic or war in Ukraine, migrants resort to social protection as human rights, however this is otherwise a far-away possibility (since they see themselves as functional agents). Some good examples are connected with the temporary protection status within the EU after the outbreak of the war, which sets an example and an expectation for Moldovans too. One of the main and most common rationales of labour migration is using income earned abroad for the acquisition of market-based social protection, most visible in medical related issues. Our respondents rarely find support from NGOs, churches or religious organisations in their home country. Similar to the state's perception that migration automatically brings welfare, having a migrant family member brings the impression among the non-migrant community members as well that these families are not financially vulnerable anymore, and therefore they are not the target group of NGOs. Family networks (often from other localities) and sometimes friends are the most active supporters of these families. Other informal types of networks are rare because, as a result of massive migration from many localities in these countries, other close adults are no longer to be found in either Moldova or in Ukraine. Migrants receive support from civil

or religious organisations in the destination country in liminal situations such as periods of unexpected illegal stay.

Through four case studies of particularly difficult situations that Moldovan or Ukrainian families face—serious illness of a child left at home (two cases), Covid 19 lockdown, and war in Ukraine—we showed how the insufficient resources and social support in their direct environment pushes these families to employ new, dynamic, indeed radical strategies to address their difficulties through enlarging and navigating their resource environment.

When the welfare state is weak and social protections as constitutional rights are not sufficient, such as in Moldova and Ukraine, a severe illness of one family member puts a severe strain on the family. The labour migration of a parent becomes the only solution to enable the family to access social protection as a commodity in the country of departure.

Under the Covid 19 lockdown, migrant members of transnational families had to use material aid received from NGOs in destination countries to support their family members in Moldova who were in an acute financial crisis and did not receive any external material aid. It is an instance where community as social protection in the destination country is transferred in times of crisis to migrant family members in the country of departure.

Many transnational families from Ukraine were forced by the Russian invasion to flee to third countries (other than the country of destination of their migration), falling under social protection as human rights (usually as temporary protection) there; but this proved insufficient.

Thus, migrant parents had no other choice than to continue their migration plan in order to support their families (now temporarily hosted abroad and increasingly vulnerable) and could not join them. It is clear that the social protection as human rights is insufficient and it needs to be supplemented by migration for work.

1.5 Special issue: “Children Left Behind by Labour Migration,”
Romanian Journal of Population Studies
<https://doi.org/10.24193/RJPS.2023.1>

Guest Editor

Mihaela HĂRĂGUŞ

The following articles are included in the Virtual Special Issue (SI): “Children Left Behind by Labour Migration,” as a common result of the three research teams in Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. The special issue was published specifically for the CASTLE project in order to disseminate the results and increase the visibility of the project’s research activities.

1.5.1 The Socialisation of Stay-behind Children in the Republic of Moldova Following Labour Migration of their Parents

<https://doi.org/10.24193/RJPS.2023.1.01>

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Galina ȚURCAN

The article **The Socialisation of Stay-behind Children in the Republic of Moldova Following Labour Migration of their Parents** examines how the labour migration of parents from the Republic of Moldova to the European Union influences the process of socialisation of stay-behind children and explores the involvement of public authorities in the socialisation of these children. Data on which the paper is based were collected in the Republic of Moldova from December 2021 through April 2022, in the course of the development of the CASTLE project. In order to study the impact of labour migration of parents on stay-behind children, a sociological investigation was conducted in the Republic of Moldova in the months of December 2021 to April 2022. In the course of the development of the CASTLE (Children Left Behind by Labour Migration: Supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian Transnational Families in the EU) project, in the Republic of Moldova 36 adults (migrant parents, parents who stayed home with their children, and caregivers), 11 representatives of public authorities (social workers, mayors, teachers/school psychologists, etc.) and 6 stay-behind children were interviewed. Also, 13 migrant parents and parents who stayed home with their children and 10 children participated in the focus group discussions. The in-depth interviews were based on a semi-structured interview guide that followed the topics proposed for analysis. Focus groups included open questions and exercises in the case of focus groups with children.

The authors emphasised that labour migration of parents influences stay-behind children, their state of mind and their socialisation process. The influences can be both positive and negative. One of the major challenges that stay-behind children encounter is the distortion of their socialisation process that can lead to the formation of a morally distorted personality, to conflicts of stay-behind children with the norms and values in the society and to deviant behaviours.

The authors pointed out that families should prepare children for life as a couple, to prepare them to be good members of their future families. If one or both parents are absent, it becomes difficult to achieve socialisation as a family member, to transmit to stay-behind children models of organising life as a couple, examples of relationships between spouses in the family, examples of resolving family conflicts, etc. This problem is mitigated if stay-behind children are left with their grandparents, who have a complete family, or in the custody of other people, also with a complete family. So, the socialisation as a family member of

the children left at home is partially compromised because they do not have the possibility to directly observe the relationships and communication between their parents.

In the Republic of Moldova, traditionally, many grandparents help parents to raise and educate their children. That is why, when parents are working abroad, many children stay at home with their grandparents. Grandparents contribute to the socialisation of their grandchildren, but the differences in age and mentality create difficulties, sometimes quite great. Certain generational problems arise. For a successful socialisation, not only a good communication is needed but also a good understanding between the participants in this process.

The research reveals some cases in which parents try to compensate their absence with money, but the results of this action are not always the most successful. Some children start hating money because it ruined their childhood. The migration can generate negative psycho-emotional impact on stay-behind children. This, in turn, can negatively influence the socialisation process. A favourable psycho-emotional state is indispensable for achieving a qualitative instructional-didactic process, for successful integration in various collectives.

As a conclusion, the authors stated that the socialisation process of stay-behind children faces several challenges. The consequences of difficulties of the process of socialisation of stay-behind children will be felt over time in the society and they will not be positive. The knowledge of these challenges and of their causes can contribute to establishing the directions and mechanisms for the realisation of the public policy that must determine the ways of solving stay-behind children's social problems. The article pointed out several aspects related to the role of the local public administration in the Republic of Moldova in solving the problems faced by children left behind by labour migration. The authorities in many cases cannot intervene with various measures, because there are no tools to compel parents to inform the authorities.

1.5.2 Adjusting to change: school-related practices and perceptions in Moldovan and Ukrainian transnational families

<https://doi.org/10.24193/RJPS.2023.1.02>

Daniela ANGI

The article discusses parents' and children's perspectives on the challenges that parental migration generates for children's school performance and activities, with a focus on transnational families from the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The study is based on interviews and focus-groups with children, migrant parents and parents who stayed at home to look after the young ones.

By involving the temporary absence of one or both parents, labour migration can complicate the circumstances that enable children to follow a straightforward school trajectory. In the narratives analysed in this study, steadiness of school performance emerges as the prevailing description outlined by children and parents alike. Many parents declare themselves satisfied with their children's school results and appreciate their perseverance. The stability of results is enabled, according to some respondents, by children's own effort and diligence, while other informants stress parental monitoring and assistance as determining factors. However, declining results are also reported, both in contexts where children live without both their parents and in those where one parent stayed at home. What the two contexts seem to share above all is the fact that separation-related distress (resulting in children's decreased focus and motivation) can act as a cause for declining performance. Children looked after by caregivers other than parents also link their school difficulties with the absence of parental monitoring of school tasks and with not having someone to ask questions when needed. The intrinsic specificity of caregiving arrangements where no parent is present generates particular concerns about monitoring for parents, who attempt to compensate for their physical absence through regular communication with their children and with children's teachers. In contrast, supervision of children fulfilling their school-tasks and contact with schools are less challenging for families where one parent stayed at home. Mothers stand out as the primary performers of multiple types of educational involvement: keeping track of children's school progress, assisting with homework, attending meetings organised in school. While these are framed by respondents as *de facto* roles that mothers fulfil in relation to their children, gender-based delineations are also referred to from the perspective of normative expectations. Thus, fathers' departure is believed to have a potentially detrimental effect on children's discipline, for mothers are expected—by children and adults alike—to be less able to act as an effective authority figure. Conversely, representations of mother-figures tend to emphasise the nurturing qualities in relation to their children. However, one can retrieve in children's recollections references to fathers being an important source of encouragement and praise, as well as instances where father's absence is perceived to affect children's self-esteem. In their turn, migrant mothers, while attempting to stay involved from afar in their children's school-lives, acknowledge fathers' efforts back home to fulfil their duties in relation to youngsters' education.

The results highlighted in the study are nevertheless to be treated with cautiousness in terms of possibility to generalise the findings to all instances of parental migration; it is highly possible that many contexts where children are left at home by one or both parents are less conducive to favourable circumstances with respect to children's education.

1.5.3 Specific needs of children left behind
by labour migration in the Republic of Moldova
<https://doi.org/10.24193/RJPS.2023.1.03>

Dorin VACULOVSKI

International labour migration from the Republic of Moldova, which registered a new intensification after the COVID-19 pandemic, caused new phenomena generating social risks, including the expansion of the number of transnational families.

It should be noted that during the last years international labour migration from the Republic of Moldova has reached an impressive level.

For the Republic of Moldova, international labour migration can be considered, in general, a beneficial phenomenon that has ensured a perspective of sustainable development. It contributed to the increase of incomes and the well-being of the population, to the reduction of the poverty level, while the foreign exchange resources entered into the country from abroad ensured economic growth, stability of the national currency, as well as a change in the consumption pattern of the population, characteristic of a standard of better life.

However, international labour migration from the Republic of Moldova has also produced new phenomena generating social risks, including the expansion of the number of transnational families. Currently, in the context of globalisation processes and the increase in the scale of migration, the phenomenon of transnational families is becoming a common global tendency, characteristic of practically any country, which does not necessarily cause serious social risks.

However, for the Republic of Moldova this phenomenon has become a negative one, which has led to demographic imbalances (accelerated ageing of the population²), to the increase in divorce, and to the decrease in the birth rate³, as well as to the problem of children left without care following the migration of the work-age.

The expansion of the number of transnational families caused by labour migration, as well as the problem of children left without care, constitute real challenges for social cohesion at the community level, as well as for the sustainability of the family institution in the Republic of Moldova. It should be noted that migration affects, first of all, the family balance, which has a strong impact on the psycho-emotional balance of children, husbands or wives who have gone abroad to support themselves and their families, as well as husbands and wives who remain home.

The phenomenon of transnational families and the problem of children left behind by labour migration are already known in the Republic of Moldova since the beginning of the 2000s, when international labour migration registered a strong intensification. During that period, civil society, the mass media, international organisations concerned with the

issue of child protection and the phenomenon of migration alerted society and public authorities, indicating the consequences and social risks that these phenomena can generate. Several researches and studies were initiated, as a result of which the public authorities developed various policies and intervention tools in the field.

Policy documents were also developed in the field, such as the Child Protection Strategy for the years 2014–2020 (Decision of the Government No. 434 of 10-06-2014). The normative framework was perfected by the launch of Law no. 140 of 14.06.2013 “Regarding the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents” (Law no. 140 of 14.06.2013), several social services provided at community level by social workers were developed, school psychologists or social pedagogues, civil society representatives, etc. The most effective management of the problem of children left without care as a result of labour migration becomes increasingly important as international labour migration, respectively, the expansion of transnational families becomes more and more extensive. Currently, due to the fact that the issue has become so acute, central and local public authorities have started to implement a practice of monitoring children separated from their parents following migration.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the situation of children left behind by labour migration, highlighting the challenges they face, as well as the specific needs of this social group. Also, the normative framework regarding guardianship, conservatorship and custody as an official and unofficial measure for the protection of children separated from their parents, the attitude of social actors (local public administration, social workers, civil society, etc.) towards the practices is also reviewed.

The following can be mentioned as conclusions of the article:

Although international labour migration from the Republic of Moldova had a fairly beneficial impact on increasing the population’s well-being and combating poverty, it also generated certain social risks, including the expansion of the number of transnational families and the problem of children left without care as a result of migration.

The most widespread problems and needs related to the issue of children left behind by labour migration are not so much material, but social and behavioural, such as children’s self-isolation, the feeling of loneliness, anxiety, emotional deprivation, etc.

The central and local public authorities in the Republic of Moldova are aware of the risks of international labour migration and try to react promptly to overcome them, either by adapting the regulatory framework, by promoting coherent and efficient public policies, or by developing new social services intended for social groups affected by migration. In the situation where the public authorities do not deal with the new problems and needs related to children left behind by migration, the following are welcome:

- The development at local level, especially in rural localities, of qualified psychological services for children left behind by migration. These services can be provided, including, by representatives of civil society (NGOs, volunteers, etc.);

- Increasing the social status of community social workers, which will generate a greater motivation for them in overcoming social risks related to labour migration;
- The expansion and development of civil society institutions at the local level, especially in rural areas (NGOs, volunteers, etc.), which could have a real impact in meeting the needs of children left behind by migration, including overcoming any social risks related to migration for work;
- The development of a well-functioning close cooperation between the representatives of the local public authorities and the civil society structures, in overcoming the problems related to the children left behind by migration. NGOs, being more skilled and flexible, are much more effective in overcoming the problems related to children left behind in migration and meeting the needs of this group of children;
- The organisation of systematic research related to children left behind by migration necessary to improve both the legislative framework and the methods of intervention by public authorities.

1.5.4 Romanian and Moldovan Migrant Families between National and Transnational Welfare Policies

<https://doi.org/10.24193/RJPS.2023.1.04>

Mara BIROU
Iulia HOSSU

The phenomenon of transnational families is one of the problems that postmodern Romania is facing, and the reaction of the state through social policies, should bring a range of possible solutions by granting rights, services, measures and assistance for those who are left at home (Voicu 2019). The case of Moldova is quite similar to that of Romania. According to the CER-103 survey (Children at risk and children separated from their parents) out of the total number of 34,107 children registered by local public authorities as separated from their parents, 29,186 were children with one or both parents temporarily working abroad (CASTLE Opening Report 2022, 48).

In this context, there is a need to analyse how the states respond to new social realities: the increase in the number of transnational families, the increased number of children living apart from their parents for shorter or longer periods of time etc. This study is carried out on the basis of the data collected within the action project ‘Children left behind by labour migration – Support of Moldovan and Ukrainian transnational families in the EU’ (CASTLE) by the Center for the Study of Transnational Families. Based on a set of interviews with key stakeholders collected in 2022 both in Romania and the Republic of

Moldova, the article highlights the reality of today's national social policies in the two states and associates the measures of public authorities and NGOs with their tendency to propose transnational welfare practices.

The government and local public authorities of Romania and Republic of Moldova have long recognized the need for enhanced measures to protect CLB whose parents have gone abroad to work. However, the efficient management of this phenomenon becomes more and more important in the situation when, amidst the background of globalisation processes, the migratory phenomenon will register an even greater intensity, and the given phenomenon - transnational families and CLB will become more widespread and will acquire new forms of manifestation that can generate new social risks.

Findings:

- Most respondents believe that Romania has legislation designed to provide a support framework for families who are in a position to leave their children at home when they go to work abroad. In Moldova, the representatives of the local public authorities consider that this framework allows them to effectively exercise their competencies in relation to the phenomenon of transnational families. Despite the fact there is legislation in force, some of the stakeholders have doubts about how it is actually applied on the ground and some respondents point to the existence of a certain degree of corruption, the use of relationships, which often prevent the application of the law;
- Collecting data at the local level on children with parents across borders is one of the logistical challenges the authorities face in both countries. The law assigns the county social assistance departments the responsibility to collect data from all town halls that request data from local schools. Because of poor cooperation, there are gaps in the databases that are later sent to the national authority. Representatives of public authorities almost unanimously mention the need for a common database to centralize information on CLB;
- The collaboration and partnerships of public authorities with non- governmental organisations in order to improve the quality and efficiency of social services for vulnerable groups are increasingly visible in recent years both in Romania and Moldova. Support programs for children left at home have become a common objective on the agenda of state entities and non-governmental organisations;
- With national policies relatively lacking in specifically targeting migration, Romania and Moldova are lagging behind in the development of the idea of welfare practices across borders. The tendency of public entities to plead for possible agreements, communication, monitoring and support relations between states is found in our results.

Recommendations:

- An international database that can be accessed by all states and bodies empowered to provide support to children left at home;
- The possibility for the national authorities to propose and apply supporting legislative frameworks that facilitate the departure of parents to work abroad with minor children;
- Local support groups and the international facilitation of communication and the relationship of both these groups and the families with the local authorities in the country/region of destination.

1.5.5 Participatory research and social action with adolescents concerning transnational families

<https://doi.org/10.24193/RJPS.2023.1.05>

Éva LÁSZLÓ
Cristina TRIBOI

Social community action initiatives for adolescents and children can promote civic involvement, self-efficacy, and positive youth development. Children who are disempowered by their age and dependence on adults may use social activism projects to improve or ameliorate social and community concerns (Torres-Harding *et al.* 2018; Willson *et al.* 2007) and contribute to the well-being and resilience of themselves and their peers.

One group for which social activism programmes are considered necessary and useful is the group of children from transnational families. The prolonged physical distance of parents is one of the challenges of childhood.

Although changes such as increased autonomy, independence and responsibility (Ducu *et al.* 2023; Cheianu-Andrei 2023) have been identified for children who stay at home, and a number of risky consequences for child well-being are also identified. The primary vulnerabilities of children related to parental migration lie in emotional well-being and associated challenges, such as deficiency in feelings of security, attachment, and safety, leading to emotional deprivation, loneliness, anxiety, depression, higher levels of responsibility, protection of parents, guilt, lower levels of social trust, and lower levels of social trust. Other major issues include health and learning difficulties, trouble with peers, and problematic behaviours (Cheianu-Andrei 2023; Turcan 2023; Wang *et al.* 2022; Pfeiffer 2019; Jenaro 2015).

Research indicates a moderating influence of resilience on the association between childhood adverse life events and mental health issues. Resilience theory emphasises

adopting a strengths-based approach when designing preventative treatments, which is considered a promising approach in the case of children left behind to prevent the harmful effects of parents missing (Lee *et al.* 2019; Wang *et al.* 2015).

Children left behind have lower levels of psychological resilience, more fragile parent-child communication, and shallower resources compared to their peers whose parents did not go to work as messengers. Harmonious relationships with parents, supportive friends, and caring teachers are found to be supportive factors in studies. School belonging, supportive relationships with peers, and caring teachers positively impact the mental well-being of children left behind.

Trusting relationships with caregivers and neighbourhood social cohesion are well predicted for subjective well-being (Wang 2023; Chai *et al.* 2018).

Participatory action research and art-based community intervention with adolescents are promising methods to promote the development and well-being of young people and children. Children's participation can give researchers more direct access to information about their perspectives, leading to new insights that add to and improve research findings. Participatory action can enhance civic participation, self-confidence, and positive development, and empower children to address social and community issues that affect them (László *et al.* 2023; Lee *et al.* 2019; Ozer 2016; Raanaas 2020).

The current article focuses on presenting the outcomes of the YouCreate participatory action research model from the Republic of Moldova, developed by Terre des Hommes Moldova and the International Institute for Child Rights and Development and carried out by Terre des Hommes Moldova and delivered as part of the Castle project, as a promising method of involving young people in adolescent-led projects aimed at social change. At the centre of this programme is an empowerment intervention that provides adolescents from transnational families with opportunities for civic engagement with other young people in addressing issues of common concern in their schools and communities to improve the quality of life of children and young people whose parents are working abroad.

YouCreate trains young leaders to guide their peers in participatory 'Art Actions', which are arts-based activities designed to address issues important to young people in their community.

Teenage leaders returning to their communities formed local initiative teams, inviting teens aged 14–18 interested in improving the quality of life of transnational families and community action.

In five localities, 59 adolescents, guided by 10 allied adults, formed teams that implemented activities through YouCreate.

The teams worked with school communities and the whole local community to explore the situation regarding the phenomenon of adults leaving for work. They evaluated the answers they received and discussed them with their teachers. After analysing local resources, they chose creative intervention activities through art and developed detailed action plans.

The aim was to improve relationships, particularly between children and adults. One team provided concrete support to parents and children in maintaining relationships using technological resources by organising training for younger children to develop digital skills.

Encouraging children and parents to create digital visuals and present them together facilitated the practice and use of digital skills by both children and adults.

Three of the five teams organised meetings with parents, carers, representatives of local child protection authorities and other community members to raise awareness of the needs of children left at home. The 19 activities involved 267 pupils, 30 psychologists and teachers, and 118 parents and carers. Exhibitions, Power Point presentations, and videos were produced and disseminated in open and closed social networking groups. The cumulative presentation of the results was made at an international conference in Chisinau with the participation of representatives of local and national authorities responsible for children's welfare and the academic world.

Results: The YouCreate programme has had a significant impact on young leaders, resulting in increased knowledge about the phenomenon, a more empathic approach, and the ability to offer support to children left at home. Participation in the program has made participants feel useful and contributing to change, as well as creating new relationships with others who are interested in similar topics. Peer-to-peer relationships are also important, as younger children are better open to teenagers than adults, especially if they have had similar experiences.

The YouCreate Castle community-art actions have positively impacted adolescent-adult relationships, also.

Young respondents believe that youth social action using artistic methods can act as an ice-breaker in schools and housing communities, leading to direct and concrete discussions, debates, and strategies to improve the well-being of children in transnational families. Participatory action research creates a friendly, supportive atmosphere in which opinions can be expressed, and experiences and feelings can be shared without labelling or blaming, which helps to facilitate community cohesion.

The YouCreate methodology provided many with the opportunity to speak openly with their parents about their experiences of physical distance between them, leading to intense emotions and positive reactions. Sharing the results with colleagues, children, and adults who contributed to the project has also been beneficial.

Reducing the harmful effects of parental absence, strengthening supportive factors, and improving resilience should be a priority for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. The presence of a caring adult is critical for children to successfully cope with challenges. The adult-child relationship is supportive when the adult can effectively treat the child or adolescent as a partner, listen, and provide concrete support.

Conclusion: YouCreate is a promising program to enhance the well-being of left-behind children and their environment. The use of artistic methods and joint artwork creation helps create a family atmosphere in the team and community. The empowerment-based, resilience-focused methodology helps teenagers develop leadership, organisational, advocacy, and social skills.

The results of the project show that resilience factors, such as healthy self-expression, age-appropriate care, family, school, and neighbourhood care, moderate but do not replace the absence of parents. Awareness of this helps set realistic expectations and create an environment where children can express painful or ambivalent feelings.

2. Country Results: Ukraine

2.1 Status and observance of the children's rights in the families of labour migrants in the conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war

Note. The article was submitted to the “Intersections.EEJSP”, but still is under the review and not published yet.

Tetiana BONDAR
Oleksii HANIUKOV

The article presents the main results of the comprehensive research (desk study and in-depth interviews with experts, in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with labour migrants and their children) of the war's impact on the situation of labour migrants from transnational families and the observance of their children's rights. The article contains an analysis of the main reasons and circumstances for labour migration, the impact of labour migration on the daily life of labour migrant families and the main problems of childcare. The most common problems in communications and relationships are considered and analysed, and the current needs of transnational families of labour migrants are determined. It is noted that labour migrants' awareness of legislation is fragmentary and incomplete, and the vision of their future and their children's future is very uncertain.

Background: According to the World Migration Report, Ukraine ranks 8th in the list of countries whose citizens go to work abroad, with an indicator of 5.5–6 million people. With the beginning of Russia's armed aggression, both Ukraine and other countries obtained new challenges, in particular regarding labour migration in wartime conditions, namely possible changes in labour migration patterns in wartime conditions among adults and their impact on compliance with the protection of children's rights. Labour migration of one or both parents has a negative impact on ensuring the rights of their children. Situation with the protection of children's rights has become even more complicated, as restrictions imposed by martial law often stand in the way of the plans of labour migrants, disrupting established communication and transport schemes, hindering family reunification and minimising the positive upbringing influence of parents.

Main results:

- Employment of one or more family members abroad often results in breaking of traditional ties, alienation, various misunderstandings and even lawsuits.
- Staying abroad often leads to destruction, “freezing” of ties with the social environment in Ukraine.
- Absence of one of the parents for a long time also leads to certain detachment of children, perception of the absent parent as almost a stranger to them, destruction of trusting relationships.
- Parents often decide to move to another country without discussing it with a child.
- Many children have been in the conditional status of “child of labour migrant” for many years and do not imagine their life any other way.
- Prolonged absence of one of the parents leads to the emergence of the child’s emotional disorders, permanent longing, to numerous everyday problems, difficulties in learning at school.
- Adolescent’s traditional needs are often left unsatisfied, questions remain unanswered.
- Some children of labour migrants who are older teenagers are left alone with adult problems and are forced to overcome them on their own.
- With the departure of even one parent abroad, the child receives less attention and the burden on the parent remaining in Ukraine increases.

2.2 External migration of Ukrainians before and after full-scale aggression (comparative analysis)

<https://doi.org/10.15407/socium2023.01.032>

Tetiana BONDAR
Oleksii HANIUKOV

The article compares external migration features before and after the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The authors analysed the main reasons and circumstances of migration in each period, the impact of migration on the daily life of migrants, the realisation of the right to work, living conditions, the situation in communities and communities in which migrants live, and the attitude towards them. The problems of caring for children in migrant families and the peculiarities of realising children’s right to education are considered. The most common issues that arise in communications and relationships in migrant families are analysed. Recommendations are offered for improving the situation of migrants, realising their needs and interests, and ensuring compliance with their rights and that of their children. The authors compare features of

external migration before the beginning of 2022 and with the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and reveal the common features and differences between these two stages of migration. The main reasons and circumstances of external migration in the pre-war period and after the full-scale invasion are determined. It is noted that before the beginning of the armed aggression of Russia, the departure of Ukrainians abroad had clearly defined signs of labour migration, and with the beginning of the war, the main argument in favour of leaving Ukraine became the desire to ensure security for themselves and their children. Three stages of the migration process are distinguished and characterised: the stage of relocation (evacuation), the stage of adaptation and the stage of integration. The authors analyse the leading causes and circumstances of migration in each period, the impact of migration on the daily life of migrants, the realisation of the right to work, living conditions, access to medical services, the situation in communities and communities in which migrants live, and attitudes towards them. Approaches to the segmentation of migrants are proposed depending on the circumstances of their departure from Ukraine, family status and the situation in the host countries. The peculiarities of the employment of Ukrainians abroad in the pre-war period and after the beginning of the war are given and the geographical, professional, gender and other parameters of labour activity of migrants are analysed. The specifics of the education and upbringing of migrant children, the peculiarities of children's right to education were analysed, the problems of education, interpersonal relations between different generations of migrants, the impact of migration on the psychological state of children and their socialisation processes were considered. The level of information and legal awareness of migrants was studied, and the lack of systematic knowledge of Ukrainian and foreign legislation regulating migration was recorded among many migrants. A list of the most urgent needs of migrants and their family members is given. Typical differences between migrants and their family members in their perception and planning of their future are analysed. Recommendations are offered for improving the situation of migrants, realising their needs and interests, and ensuring compliance with their rights and that of their children.

3. Country results: Republic of Moldova

3.1 The role of public authorities of the Republic of Moldova in supporting transnational families and children left behind by labour migration

<https://doi.org/10.15407/socium2023.01.074>

Dorin VACULOVSCI

The article **The role of public authorities of the Republic of Moldova in supporting transnational families and children left behind by labour migration** is dedicated to the analysis of the role of local and central public authorities in overcoming the problem of children left behind by labour migration. The article is based on the analysis of the results of a sociological study that reflects the impact of parents' work migration on the children left behind.

Generally, labour migration from the Republic of Moldova, which registers a new intensification after the COVID-19 pandemic, increased the number of transnational families and children left behind. During the last 20 years, international labour migration from the Republic of Moldova has reached an impressive level. Thus, in 2017, according to the Labor Force Survey, the number of persons who went abroad in search of a job was about 319 thousand or about 18% of the inactive population aged 15 and over. Men constituted 66.4%, while women, respectively 33.6% of the total number of migrants. The share of people who left rural areas was 70.5%. Less official sources, estimate the extent of labour migration from the Republic of Moldova at 1 million people.

It should be mentioned that the problems of transnational families and children left behind as a result of labour migration were already known in the Republic of Moldova. Several field studies and researches have been dedicated to this issue, and public authorities have developed policies and intervention tools to manage this problem as efficiently as possible.

Various strategic documents were developed, such as the *Child Protection Strategy for the years 2014–2020*, the normative framework was perfected by the launch of the *Law no. 140 of 14.06.2013 "Regarding the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents"*, several social services provided at the community level by social

workers, school psychologists, etc. have been developed. The process of migration becomes more and more intense, especially taking into account the globalisation that can generate new problems for transnational families and children left behind. This requires a more efficient management and in-depth studies of migration-related issues to prevent new social risks.

In general, contemporary labour migration from the Republic of Moldova that has entered the next phase of maturity can be seen as a challenge for social cohesion at the community level, as well as for the integrity of the family institution. At the same time, the problem of transnational families and children left behind is becoming more widespread throughout the world.

In 2021, according to the CER-103 survey (Children at risk and children separated from their parents) managed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, the total number of children separated from their parents registered by local public authorities was 34,107 children, of which 24,763 children are from rural area. Of this number of children, 29,186 are children whose both parents/one parent is temporarily abroad, of which 21,684 are from rural areas.

It should be mentioned that migration affects, first of all, the family balance, which has a strong impact on the psychological balance of children and their parents, those who stayed at home and those who went abroad to provide for themselves and their families. One of the problems of transnational families is that the members of the families become “distant” from each other, because they can no longer see each other, they can no longer hear each other and they can no longer feel each other.

This article is focused on reflecting opinions of the representatives of the central and local public authorities participating in the CASTLE research project (mayors, social workers, specialists of institutions that deal directly with labour migration from the Republic of Moldova, etc.) regarding transnational families and children left behind. It is mainly about their attitude towards the normative framework and policies regarding guardianship, as an official and unofficial measure of child care and protection; the respondents' attitude towards the existing practices regarding parental responsibilities and official and unofficial guardianship within the system of child care and protection; the challenges faced by child protection authorities.

As conclusions, it can be mentioned that labour migration from the Republic of Moldova has solved many problems related to well-being and combating poverty. However, it also caused a number of problems, including the problem of transnational families and children left without care due to migration which became more and more pressing, taking on new forms of manifestation. Under the conditions of globalisation processes, over the years the picture of migration from the Republic of Moldova changes, so that migration enters a new phase of maturity. If initially people left with the idea that they would return after solving their material problems, now the tendency to emigrate with the whole family

is becoming more and more evident. However, against the background of the intensification of migration processes, the number of transnational families, whose children are left without care as a result of labour migration, is growing rapidly. Many of the children from transnational families, in which one or both parents have left, suffer from their absence, cannot fully integrate into social networks, face various social problems, which requires prompt and effective intervention by public authorities. However, the consequences of this situation will already be felt, when it will be too late and then it is not known if it will be possible to make up for what was omitted in time. Central and local public authorities in the Republic of Moldova are aware of the problem of transnational families and children left without care due to labour migration and react effectively to all challenges related to the problem in question either by adapting the legal framework or by developing new public policies and social services .

The article comes with a series of conclusions and recommendations related to minimising the negative effects of the situation of transnational families and children left behind whose parents are working abroad, including the improvement of the legal framework, policies, procedures and practices in the field of official guardianship and unofficial in the child care and protection system, the development of social services necessary to prevent these negative effects.

3.2 The impact of labour migration from the Republic of Moldova on children left behind (perspectives from parents and caregivers)

<https://doi.org/10.15407/socium2023.01.088>

Galina ȚURCAN

In the article **The Impact of Labor Migration from the Republic of Moldova on Children Left Behind (Perspectives from Parents and Caregivers)** presents the results of a sociological study that reflects the impact produced by the labour migration of parents from the Republic of Moldova on left-behind children seen from the perspective of adults—migrant parents, stay-behind parents, and caregivers.

In December 2021 and January 2022, during the CASTLE (Children Left Behind by Labour Migration: Supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian Transnational Families in the EU) project, in the Republic of Moldova, 36 adults (labour migrant parents stay behind parents and caregivers) were interviewed. And during April 2022, 13 migrant parents and parents who stay home with their children participated in the focus group discussions.

Sociological research has primarily focused on the following aspects: the general context of labour migration; relations with the local public administration; caring for left-behind

children; the influence of labour migration on the physical health and psycho-emotional state of children; the influence of labour migration on academic success, kindergarten activities, and children's social integration; communication between migrant parents and left behind children; the influence of labour migration on the well-being of transnational families and the material support given to children; plans for the future and expectations from the state.

The author states that among the main problems faced by children left at home and other members of transnational families, the following can be mentioned: communication deficiencies, the difficulties of remote education of children, the negative influence of migration on the psycho-emotional status of left-behind children, and the difficulties of left behind children's socialisation. Parents and caregivers report other problems, such as communication deficiencies with local public administrations, communication problems within the community, and problems related to caring for children left at home. The absence for an extended period of one or both parents can cause inadequate care and support for left-behind children and many other problems. The study shows that some parents are very dissatisfied with what the state does for them. Adults (parents and caregivers) believe that the state is mainly to blame because the citizens are forced to leave. Even if there are specific positive influences on left-behind children and transnational families in general, such as material well-being, the negative influences of migration prevail.

The article revealed that the impact of parental labour migration on children left at home is high. Members of national families, especially children, face a multitude of problems. Adults (parents and caregivers) are generally aware of the risks of migration and try to make efforts to minimise them and make children's lives better and more manageable.

In the article it is specified that considering the situation in the Republic of Moldova, the degree of development of the country's economy, and especially the tensions in the world, leaving for work abroad will not stop shortly. Moreover, as a result, many parents will face the same problem—either they go abroad to work and leave their children at home or stay home but have no financial resources to support their children.

The article concludes that the impact of the labour migration of parents on left-behind children is vital.

There are significant deficiencies in communication and collaboration between parents, caregivers, and representatives of local public authorities. This hinders the resolution of problems faced by members of transnational families. Therefore, the government and civil society must make joint efforts to support both migrant parents and left-behind children.

3.3 Children's opinion about the migration of their parents (the case of the Republic of Moldova)

<https://doi.org/10.15407/socium2023.01.100>

Diana CHEIANU-ANDREI

The article reports the problem of children left behind by labour migration in the opinion of children. The Republic of Moldova continues to be one of the countries significantly affected by migration. Many people perceive this phenomenon as a chance to support their families, including giving their children a better education, as a way to assert themselves. The remittances of Moldovan migrants constitute an essential share in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – 15.1% in 2020, Moldova being in the top 10 countries with the most remittances in GDP in Europe and Central Asia (1.6 million USD). Labour migration abroad has positive and negative consequences in various fields—economic, social and political, including the demographic situation. However, the most significant impact is on nuclear and extended family members.

The CASTLE research on the situation of needy children and children left behind aimed to highlight the specific needs of children left behind after migration from the Republic of Moldova in the opinion of adults (parents, caregivers), as well as children. The different dimensions of children's well-being were empirically evaluated using qualitative research within the project. Migration was found not to be associated with negative outcomes for children's well-being in any of the dimensions analysed. However, children living in returned migrant households achieve higher rates of well-being in specific dimensions such as emotional health and material well-being. The specific needs of children and elderly left behind due to migration elucidates the psychological, social and economic impact of migration on children and older adults, revealing the implications for the family, community and society at large. Children and elderly people explain the migration of family members as being determined by the intention to escape poverty or improve their living conditions, the lack of employment opportunities, the inability to ensure children's further education, etc. Nationally representative research on migration and children's health in Moldova and Georgia highlights that children of migrants have overall positive or no different health compared to children from non-migrant households. However, significant gender differences are found in both countries. Often, girls from Moldova and Georgia are more at risk of poorer health when living transnationally. These results add nuance to an area of research that has mainly emphasised negative outcomes for children in transnational care. The large number of Moldovan migrants working abroad, including children left without parental care due to migration, has led the government to adopt specific legislative measures to minimise the negative effects of parental migration on children. Consequently,

Law no. 140 on the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents¹, which requires the recording, monitoring and protection of children without parental care due to migration.

The parents' perception of the migration of the children left behind depends on several factors: who left, the age of the children left behind, the period of migration of the parents, the person who takes care of the children due to migration, friends and their support. Research data attests to the positive impact on children's well-being; however, children are affected psychologically. The psychological impact on children left behind is characterised by loneliness, lack of affection and emotional deprivation, complemented by early maturity and anxiety. Children are frustrated not only because they cannot receive affection, but also because they have to give it. These emotional disadvantages leave an imprint on the child's psychological development, influencing self-perception and preventing social integration and the assimilation of social roles. The child's communication with his parents through technical means reduces the effects of emotional deprivation.

The problems and difficulties that children must face make them think of their values and future. Thus, the family and its integrity are at the top of their priorities.

The research reveals that peers and sometimes teachers do not understand children left behind. Support networks for these children are less developed and prove the necessity to undertake new measures within the educational institution in order to reduce the negative impact of migration on children: (i) compulsory introduction of psychological services that would help both children with migrant parents and children that have parents in Moldova, to provide them necessary support; (ii) organising social activities to reduce loneliness and Children's opinion about the migration of their parents increase the level of communication; (iii) working out and disseminating various information sources for teachers and other professionals; etc.

Keeping a record, monitoring, and protecting children left behind due to migration by social workers, teachers, etc., even though it was stipulated by Law No. 140 in 2013, still represents a challenge. Also, the forms of support and social services provided to children are less developed and limited to some civil society organisation's initiatives.

Finally, improving communication between parents and children is essential. Parents should be guided to be more sensitive to the subjects discussed by the children before and after their migration.

3.4 Labour migration and the phenomenon of transnational families from the Republic of Moldova

<https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.12>

Dorin VACULOVSKI

The article “Labour migration and the phenomenon of transnational families from the Republic of Moldova” analyses the impact of labour migration from the Republic of Moldova on the situation of transnational families and the children left behind by migration.

The contemporary era can certainly be called an era of migration. In 2020, according to United Nations estimates, international migration reached over 281 million people or 3.6% of the world’s population (IOM, 2022). Although the COVID-19 pandemic, in a way, has reduced the intensity of migration processes, the trend of increasing migration, especially labour migration, continues. The migratory phenomenon is characteristic of practically any state, and migration has become a defining feature of the modern global economy.

Currently, for the Republic of Moldova, considered as the country of origin, the migratory phenomenon, especially labour migration, has become a defining element of economic development. Labour migration processes from the Republic of Moldova have become an important factor in combating poverty and increasing the well-being of the population of the Republic of Moldova. And the economic growth registered by the Republic of Moldova during the last years is precisely due to the remittances of migrant workers who complete the economic circuit of the country.

According to the Labor Force Survey in 2022, the number of people who went abroad for a period of up to one year in search of a job was about 93 thousand people or about 7.5% of the population out of the labour force for 15 years and above (NBS, 2022). However, the cumulative number of labour migrants in the last 25 years from the Republic of Moldova is much higher. Various sources estimate the extent of labour migration from the Republic of Moldova from 400 thousand to one million people (Zwager N., Sințov R. 2014). According to data from the Population Census over 10 years, from 2004 to 2014, the population witnessed a decline caused by labour migration, from 3.3 million people to 2.6 million people NBS Yearbook, 2022. It should be noted that the share of people who left rural areas constitutes about 70% of all migrants (Labor Force Survey, 2022).

Although for the Republic of Moldova the migratory phenomenon has contributed to several beneficial effects, it also generates certain social risks, such as the decline of employment, the ageing of the population, the expansion of the number of transnational families, the problem of children left without care as a result of labour migration. It should be noted that the problem of transnational families is becoming more widespread throughout the world, becoming a global phenomenon.

The problem of transnational families and children left without care as a result of labour migration is already known in the Republic of Moldova. During the last years, several researches were initiated in the field, and the public authorities, being aware of the seriousness of the problem, developed policies and intervention tools, including the Strategy for the Protection of the Child for the years 2014–2020 (Decision of Government no. 434 of 27.11.2014), the normative framework was perfected by the launch of Law no. 140 of 14.06.2013 “Regarding the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents” (Law no. 140 of 14.06.2013), several social services provided at the community level by the assistants were developed by social workers, school psychologists, etc.

The most effective management of the situation of transnational families becomes more and more important in the situation where, against the background of globalisation processes, labour migration from the Republic of Moldova will register an even greater intensification, and the problem of transnational families and children left without care will become even more widespread and will lead to the emergence of various new social risks.

In this context, current research into the situation of children left without care after migration becomes increasingly important. The purpose of the given article is to analyse the impact of labour migration on the expansion of the phenomenon of transnational families and the situation of children left without care following migration from the Republic of Moldova, to highlight the problems they face, as well as the specific needs of this social group.

Labour migration from the Republic of Moldova had a rather beneficial impact on the economic and social development of the Republic of Moldova. By increasing the volume of remittances, international labour migration has led to an increase in the well-being of the population and the fight against poverty.

At the same time, labour migration has also generated a series of social risks, such as the decline of employment on the labour market, the ageing of the population, the expansion of transnational families, the problem of children left without care as a migration result. The central and local public authorities in the Republic of Moldova are aware of the risks of international labour migration and try to overcome them quite effectively, either by the adaptation of the regulatory framework, or by promoting coherent and efficient public policies, or by developing new public services for affected social groups of migration.

3.5 Methodological aspects and results of conducting focus group interviews in the study of the opinion of children left behind by labour migration

<https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.05>

Elena VACULOVSKI

The article Methodological aspects experience and results of conducting focus group interviews in the study of the opinion of children left behind by labour migration present the experience of conducting focus group interviews with children, carried out within the project Children left behind by labour migration: supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian transnational families in the European Union.

The article was structured in 6 chapters: Introduction, Literature review, Data and Methodology, The organisation and conducting of focus group interviews with children, The analysis of the focus groups' discussion results and Conclusions.

The author emphasised that one of the important characteristics of this technique is its complexity, both by the way it is carried out, but also by the method of achieving the proposed objectives, naturally bringing the participants together in a united group. The focus group technique is focused on the participants' development of pleasure for the discussion, which takes place in a positive climate and develops natural strategies to avoid or reduce communication misunderstandings regarding the discussed topic. A central role in the successful conduct of the discussion within the "focus group" technique as well as in achieving the research objectives belongs to the moderator, who can often be the researcher himself. The moderator is the one who provokes the expression of opinions and directs the discussion. The moderator's difficult task is to provide everything necessary for the interview and to prepare himself.

The author pointed out that in the researches that studies the opinion of children, the focus group technique is welcome, because it provides quite relevant results, due to the fact that children talk to each other and are more open. When the child's discussion with an adult takes place, a subjective barrier appears. Children may be embarrassed by some questions, they may try to say what they were taught by their parents, at school, etc. The focus group technique allows the generation of honest responses in a relatively free discussion among peers. Thus, the moderator (researcher) has the task of creating the necessary atmosphere and guiding the discussion in the necessary direction. In this context, I believe that in the research that adults do with children, those introductory discussions are welcome, which would relax the children and create a correct attitude towards their role in the research.

For developing this article, was analysed literature concerning the subjects of focus group method in research, studies about the situation of migrant people, transnational

families and the well-being of children left behind by labour migration. Also was studied some articles concerned with the use of focus group discussion methodology.

In order to obtain better qualitative results, the research sought the free expression of the opinion of all respondents participating in the research. This aimed to highlight the

The research reveals some cases of possible negative aspects related to the phenomenon of transnational families and children left without care whose parents are away working abroad. Also, within the research, solutions or intervention methods from the public authorities were sought to overcome the problems faced by transnational families.

The guide for moderation of focus groups with children was structured in 5 modules and included the following topics:

Presentation of the participants and the discussion rules: Module I. *The perception of migration and its impact on transnational families and children left without parental care*; Module II. *Caring for the child after the parents leave*; Module III. *The changes that occur after the parents' migration*; Module IV. *Existing social services in the community*; Module V. *Future perspectives*.

In conclusion, it was mentioned that in focus group research with children it is very important to create an atmosphere of understanding. Especially since this technique allows the generation of honest responses in a relatively free discussion among peers. Children are more honest, and the behavioural stereotypes imposed by society are not yet so strong when using focus groups interviews. The age difference between the moderator (researcher) is a factor that demotivates children to be open in communication. The mature person is perceived by them as a mentor, not as an equal interlocutor. In this context, the moderator has the task not only to manage the existing relationships, but also to create a comfortable environment for the participants in the discussions.

The analysis of results of focus group interviews with children showed that children left at home without parents receive less love and warmth. These children develop and mature faster, they become more serious, more responsible. Directly or indirectly, the children feel responsibility for the situation related to their parents' departure. The majority of children do not expect special actions from the community, they rather want to receive emotional, moral and psychological support from the people around them. And, of course most children believe that it would be best for the parents to take the children with them when they leave, or not to leave at all.

Action Research in the three countries: important results achieved by Tdh Moldova, Tdh Ukraine and Tdh Romania

Specific objective 1:

The potentially negative impact of labour migration policies and dynamics on the protection of children in Moldova and Ukraine is understood thanks to solution-oriented research structures.

A5. Action Research in Moldova, Ukraine and Romania

MOLDOVA

 Status: Concluded

Since the project's inception, Tdh Moldova has been actively engaged in providing direct support to the ASEM Research Team. Specifically:

- **Child Co-Researchers:** Tdh Moldova played an active role in the identification and formation of a team of child co-researchers, consisting of five children.
- **Development of Interview Guides:** Tdh Moldova provided direct assistance for the development and validation of interview guides, designed for both children and their parents or caregivers. The interview guide for children was carefully consulted with the team of young co-researchers to ensure its appropriateness and relevance.
- **Capacity Building Workshops:** Between October and November 2021, two capacity-building workshops were conducted in an online format, actively engaging the young co-researchers. These workshops aimed to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to participate effectively in the research process.

Focus Groups with Children: Tdh Moldova also played an active role in identifying and involving children in two focus groups. Specifically, 17 children, whose parents (or a parent) were working abroad, participated as respondents. These children were carefully selected from three different regions of Moldova. The primary goal of all these activities was to familiarise children with the evaluation process and methodology. During these sessions, they gained valuable insights into conducting interviews with their peers, identifying potential challenges, developing strategies to overcome these challenges, and understanding

the importance of meeting deadlines and the process for submitting their findings to the research team. These workshops were expertly facilitated by members of the research team (ASEM).

Thus, involving children and young people in the research process represented an innovative and empowering experience that equipped them with valuable practical skills for the future. It also positions them as active contributors to society, allowing them to recognize the significance of their opinions.

We have achieved success in integrating children into the research process by:

- Actively identifying child respondents, particularly those with parents working abroad, to provide a diverse perspective;
- Collaborating with child respondents to review and refine the question guide, ensuring it is appropriate and effective for children;
- Entrusting children with the responsibility of conducting interviews with their peers, fostering a more relatable and comfortable environment.

More specifically, following the comprehensive training, young co-researchers were empowered to:

- Clearly articulate the purpose of the interview, emphasising its aim to understand children’s experiences, opinions, and potential solutions to various issues;
- Ensure that the interview conversations remain aligned with the research topic, promoting productive and relevant discussions;
- Assist young interviewees in expressing themselves confidently and engaging in deeper reflection on the subjects at hand.
- Employ open-ended questions that encourage thoughtful and comprehensive responses, avoiding simple, one-word answers such as ‘Yes’, ‘No’, or ‘Maybe’, etc.

These observations could be substantiated by the feedback received from the young participants during the interviews conducted, specifically:

{How did you feel during the interview?}

“During the interview I felt a bit nervous, I wanted to hide this from the interviewee to prevent them from experiencing the same emotions. The state of compassion was always there, thinking about my situation, somehow the questions also aroused in me a longing, a lack, but I tried to control my emotions, Usually, I let my emotions run freely, as I am a very emotional person, but I restrained myself to maintain a calm atmosphere.”

“It was a nice experience, I felt at ease because I have conducted similar research, and there were no negative aspects.”

{What difficulties did you encounter in organising and conducting the interview?}

“Unfortunately, it was challenging for me to find a person because most of them were unwilling to discuss such a topic. It was also difficult to extract detailed responses from that person; they tended to provide very generalised and brief answers. Apart from that, everything else went well.”

{What would be your suggestions or important things in your vision that need to be communicated/brought to the attention of the Adult Researchers?}

“Putting these interviews in writing may be more comfortable for some individuals, as they may find it uncomfortable to speak directly. Children are very sensitive to this topic, and this might be the reason why they refuse to answer some questions about their parents’ migration.”

“Indeed, children do suffer due to their parents’ absence. Some may appear tough (like the child I interviewed), but deep down, they experience longing and remorse. This ache may not be evident at the moment, but as they grow into adulthood, they carry a profound and enduring wound that is challenging to heal.”

A5.10. Interactive materials about the main findings of the research

Status:  Ongoing

Interactive materials summarising the research outcomes have been developed in three languages: Romanian, Ukrainian, and English. The primary aim of these resources is to provide information to a wide audience on the perspectives of children left behind, the experiences of parents working abroad, and the viewpoints of local authorities regarding this critical phenomenon.

These interactive materials are designed for a diverse audience, including community members, stakeholders, policymakers, and anyone interested in understanding the impact of parental migration on children and their communities.

To ensure widespread dissemination and accessibility, the project partners distributed these materials through various channels, including social media platforms. Additionally, the materials were integrated into our ongoing project activities until the project’s conclusion, guaranteeing a continuous and effective dissemination process.

A5.7. Dissemination of research reports

ROMANIA

Status: **C**  **cluded**

To disseminate the opening report, an International Conference was organised in Bucharest, on 7 June 2022, titled “Families without borders in Ukraine and Moldova. Preliminary findings of unique research on transnational families.”



The symposium on the challenges faced by children left behind due to migration brought together a diverse group of participants, including researchers, policymakers, and representatives from Terre des hommes Foundation in Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. The agenda was thoughtfully designed to address critical issues, from research findings to policy recommendations and practical implementations.

The event commenced with insightful opening remarks from key figures:

- Tudor Roşu, Head of Eastern Europe Delegation at Terre des hommes Foundation, set the stage by emphasising the importance of addressing the challenges faced by transnational families in Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine.
- Ahmed Sharmarke, representing ICMPD, provided a broader context, highlighting the significance of international collaboration in addressing migration-related issues.
- Sandra Pralong, PhD, State Adviser at the Presidential Administration, offered a governmental perspective on relations with Romanians abroad, emphasising the need for comprehensive solutions.
- Maria Mădălina Turza, State Counsellor at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, and Cristina Robu, Counselor at the Department for Romanians Everywhere, provided insights into the Romanian government’s approach to migration-related challenges.
- Viorela Telegdi-Csetri, PhD Habil, the project manager from Babeş-Bolyai University, introduced the academic perspective, underlining the importance of research in shaping effective policies.

Key Points of the Research Report and Policy Recommendations:

- Áron Telegdi-Csetri, PhD, the research manager at Babeş-Bolyai University, presented key insights from the research report, providing a foundation for the discussions that followed.
- The CASTLE research team presented detailed findings and policy recommendations, offering a comprehensive view of the challenges faced by children left behind

in Moldova and Ukraine. The team included researchers from the Academy for Economic Studies in Moldova, the Ukrainian Institute for Social Research after Olexander Yaremenko, and Babeş-Bolyai University.

- Elena Madan, Director of Terre des hommes Foundation in Moldova, Olga Dombrowska, Deputy Director of Terre des hommes Ukraine, and Laura Sava-Ghica, Deputy Director of Terre des hommes Romania, shared insights on the practical implementation of policy recommendations within their respective regions.

The symposium concluded with a round table discussion involving CASTLE members and authorities from Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine. This engaging session fostered dialogue and collaboration on shaping effective public policies for children left behind by migration.

The symposium provided a platform for diverse perspectives, facilitating a holistic approach to addressing the challenges faced by transnational families and ensuring the well-being of children affected by migration. The discussions underscored the importance of research, collaboration, and informed policy decisions in creating positive outcomes for these vulnerable populations.

Participants received a feedback survey at the end of the conference. The survey had 40 respondents, 36 women and 4 men from which 20 of them with ages above 46 years old, 14 of them aged between 36–45 years old, 4 of them with ages between 25–35 years old. 25 participants from Romania completed the survey and 15 participants from Moldova. 95% were very satisfied and satisfied with the content of the conference.

The second webinar was organised on 6 October 2023, at the beginning of the International Conference “Children left behind. Best Practices of Protection and Challenges – Romania, Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova.” The academic articles published during the project and presented during the webinar show that the challenges faced by transnational families are multifaceted. The first article, “Asserting children’s rights through the digital practices of transnational families,” delves into the initial findings on family cohesion. This research explores how digital practices influence the assertion of children’s rights within the context of transnational families. In contrast, the study titled “‘Not like everyone else?’ Transnational families’ relationship in their home society—between stigma and dialogue” sheds light on the adversity and distrust surrounding transnational families. It examines the complex dynamics these families encounter in their home societies, navigating a delicate balance between societal stigma and the need for open dialogue. The introduction of “Hybrid Transnational Social Protection” offers a novel perspective, exploring the intersection of local and transnational participation in the social protection nexus for families with stay-behind children. Additionally, a presentation on national public support policies in Romanian and Moldovan migrant families examines the delicate interplay between national and transnational welfare policies. Lastly, the discussion on “Adjusting to change: school-related practices and perceptions in Moldovan and Ukrainian

transnational families” provides insights into the challenges and adaptations these families undergo within the educational sphere, shedding light on their experiences as they navigate change. Together, these studies contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced issues faced by transnational families, offering valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and advocates alike.



Specific objective 2:

Legal and policy frameworks impacting labour migration in Moldova and Ukraine are improved based on solid empirical research evidence, including in relation to circular and temporary labour migration.

The legislative framework of the Republic of Moldova was improved in 2023 by Government Decision No. 81 of 22-02-2023. We welcomed this decision, as a result of the fact that this was the first legislative recommendation from Policy brief no 1 made within the Castle project: To refine and promote the law on guardianship and temporary custody.

Improving the legislative framework regarding custody in the Republic of Moldova

We welcome the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Moldova to adopt Government Decision No. 81 of 22-02-2023, approve the framework Regulation regarding the establishment of custody, and ensure the organisation and operation of the guardianship/guardianship service. The document has been Published: 04.07.2023 in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova No. 119-121 art. 259.

The framework regulation regarding the establishment of custody and ensuring the organisation and operation of the guardianship/guardianship service establishes the way of organisation and operation of the guardianship/guardianship service and the procedure for establishing custody over children whose/whose legal representatives/sole legal representative is temporarily in another locality in the country or abroad or cannot fulfil their obligations regarding the child’s upbringing, care and education due to health problems.

Legal framework regarding Custody in the Republic of Moldova

Custody is a form of temporary protection of the child separated from his parents due to the temporary location of his legal representatives/sole legal representative for a period of more than two months in another locality in the country or abroad or the impossibility of fulfilling the obligations regarding child rearing, care and education for health reasons.

According to statistical data, at the beginning of 2022, there were 28,015 children in the records of the guardianship authorities in Moldova whose legal representatives are temporarily in another place in the country or abroad, of which 10,775 children have been established as a form of temporary protection (9661 children in the extended family and 1114 children in the family of third persons).

The CASTLE Action research highlighted that the often precarious work of migrants (seasonal agricultural work, construction, care in private homes) and short-term employment opportunities sometimes make for insufficient planning of departure and care arrangements for children left at home. Continuity of care is also very important.

The potential advantages brought by this modification include offering a sense of stability, security, and a nurturing environment to these children, safeguarding their best interests as they navigate the complexities of temporary separation from their parents.

- Hotărârea Guvernului nr. 81 din 22.02.2023 pentru aprobarea Regulamentului-cadru cu privire la instituirea custodiei și asigurarea organizării și funcționării Serviciului de tutelă/curatelă.

A6.2. Policy advice sessions

(A6.2. 10/15 national, regional, and local authorities from Moldova participate in yearly policy advice sessions concerning labour migration)

MOLDOVA

Status:  Ongoing

The first policy advisory session, addressing child protection professionals, took place in Chisinau. It was attended by 16 representatives from Moldovan public authorities responsible for child protection:

- Ministry of Labor and Social Protection;
- Diaspora Relations Office of the State Chancellery;
- Chisinau Municipal Division for the Protection of Children's Rights;
- Republican Center for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance;
- Social Assistance and Family Protection Departments across various regions (Ștefan-Vodă, Călărași, Dondușeni, Fălești, Ialoveni);

- Representatives from educational institutions in Drochia;
- Academic professionals from the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova.

This session marked the beginning of our ongoing efforts to engage with relevant authorities, fostering discussions and contributing to well-informed policymaking in the context of labour migration and child protection. In this context, the preliminary results of the Research and Policy Recommendations were presented to the participants.

During the session, participants were divided into working groups, each focusing on different topics. They engaged in an exercise where they placed themselves in the shoes of parents, children, and community actors. The aim was to reflect on the following:

- The positive effects of migration on the situation of transnational family members (children, parents, caregivers);
- The negative effects of migration on the situation of transnational family members (children, parents, caregivers);
- The identification of solutions to mitigate the negative effects while considering the positive aspects, as well as available community/national resources and recommendations provided by the researchers.

As a result of the presentations and discussions within each group, a set of recommendations emerged. These recommendations were further debated in the larger group, comprising all participants. The final recommendations submitted for supporting Transnational Families and specialists providing support to children left behind are as follows:

- The need for a child protection specialist at the community level;
- The need for the development of a training guide/handbook for professionals to enhance their knowledge in areas such as pre-departure preparation, childcare transfer, and legal protection of children left behind;
- The need for the development of a handbook for parents/caregivers to increase their knowledge on topics such as pre-departure preparation, legal protection of children left behind, childcare transfer, transnational communication tools, and psychosocial support.

A subsequent presentation and consultation session on Policy Recommendations 2 & 3 is planned until the end of the project as part of our ongoing activities.

UKRAINE

Status: **Ongoing**

In September 2022, the initial consultations on Policy Brief 1 were conducted in Ivano-Frankivsk, and this marked a significant step in our collaboration. We were delighted to host 12 dedicated participants representing various communities within the Ivano-Frankivsk region, including Ivano-Frankivsk, Kolomyia, Kalush, Tlumach, Rohatyn, Burshtyn, and

Nadvirna. The attendees comprised officials from children’s services, social policy departments, social service centres, and other relevant offices.

In a bid to foster comprehensive discussions, we also invited participants from the “Ukrainian Institute for Social Research” (UISR). These participants included Oleksiy Ganyukov, PhD, Head of the Department of Socio-Economic Research at UISR, and Hanna Goryacheva, Manager of UISR.



The consultation session proved to be an invaluable opportunity for all participants. We commenced by providing an overview of the CASTLE project, ensuring that everyone had a solid understanding of its objectives. Subsequently, we delved into the contents of Policy Brief 1, discussing its primary findings and conclusions. To enhance our collaborative efforts, we proposed dividing into four groups, each focusing on specific aspects related to the Policy Brief:

- Group 1: Children left behind due to their parents’ migration;
- Group 2: The role of public authorities in the context of migration;
- Group 3: The experiences and challenges faced by parents working abroad;
- Group 4: The contributions and perspectives of civil society activists.

In these varied roles, participants engaged in insightful discussions, considering both the positive and negative impacts of labour migration from different angles. Together, we brainstormed potential solutions, aiming to address the multifaceted challenges associated with migration.

A key highlight of the consultation was the invaluable experience shared by local authorities who are actively involved with transnational families. Their real-world insights greatly enriched the discussion.

We also had the privilege of receiving comments and recommendations from the engaged participants.

In conclusion, the collaborative spirit demonstrated during these consultations is a testament to the dedication of our participants and the commitment to making a positive impact.

Here are some comments from participants:

“Indeed, it happens that parents decide to go abroad and give their child a week’s notice or even less. After all, a child also has his or her own life: friends, school, hobby groups, etc. We also made a great contribution to IDPs, as we provided assistance in various areas, but our work is invaluable.”

“In order to bring labour migrants back to Ukraine, we need to create working conditions for them here so that they do not go abroad and stay with their families. They should invest their skills in working here. It will be better for children and for families in general. After all, there is virtually no family when one parent leaves, at best, when one of the parents leaves and the child stays with mom or dad. And when both parents leave, the child is effectively a social orphan. Therefore, we need to increase the number of jobs. And unfortunately, this statistic will increase, because of the war, they will not return now, or they have nowhere to go, or they have already found work in another country.”

“It would be good to organise psychological trainings for families where children stayed with one of the parents, or even with grandparents because the parents went abroad. For example, if we talk about topics, it depends on the situation, with whom the children stayed. After all, they lack the support of their parents, and this loss of connection between children and parents is a very big problem. Children have resentment, especially when at some point their parents were not present in their lives when they needed them.”

A7.1. Capacity building for service providers in countries of origin (A7.1. A minimum number of 75 local service providers in countries of origin (Moldova) have participated in online capacity building activities)

MOLDOVA

Status: Confirmed

One curriculum and training materials for service providers have been developed by a specialist from Romania. This course is specifically designed for authorities and service providers in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, addressing the challenges faced by transnational families who have migrated for economic reasons.

Tdh Moldova has adapted this course to the Moldovan context, ensuring its relevance and applicability within the region. The course content serves the purpose of enhancing services in the countries of origin for transnational families. It achieves this by informing service providers about the distinctive characteristics of transnational families, their needs, and best practices observed in countries with experience in migration, whether as countries of origin or destination for migration flows.


A total of **105 local service providers** in the countries of origin have actively participated in **four offline capacity-building activities**.

Thus, these activities engaged:

- 18 specialists from the Social Assistance and Family Protection Departments;
- 50 social workers from three regions within Moldova (Ștefan-Vodă, Călărași, Dondușeni);
- 37 specialists from regional/municipal psycho-pedagogical support services.

These sessions took place in an offline format (as organising them online presented logistical challenges and the potential for low event attendance). The offline format proved to be more timely, productive, and interactive. Participants demonstrated active engagement in discussions and reflection, making the learning experience more effective.

UKRAINE

Status: Conc  d

Between August 3 and September 7, a comprehensive training series unfolded, bringing together 76 social sector professionals from three western Ukrainian regions: Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmelnytsky, and Ternopil. One of the primary objectives was to strengthen and foster networking among these professionals, nurturing a fruitful ground for future collaboration and the exchange of invaluable experiences within the social sector.

Notably, the brochures produced under the CASTLE project collected considerable attention. Participants showed an eager interest in these resources, expressing their intent to both peruse and share them with their absent colleagues. This collective enthusiasm culminated in the distribution of 100 brochures to eager hands.

The training sessions were organised with meticulous care. The trainer crafted a presentation, rooted in the training manual that had been meticulously assembled in Romania as part of the CASTLE project. These sessions delved into various aspects of labour migration to the European Union, defining the profile of a transnational family, expounding on the nuances of interaction with such families, and equipping participants with insights on preparing a child for their parents' departure.

Throughout the presentations, the trainer skillfully fostered an environment of open dialogue, encouraging participants to share their thoughts, experiences, and professional insights. As is often the case, it was the discussion of real-life cases that drew the most impassioned engagement.

It is interesting to note, that during one of the training sessions, a debate emerged concerning the impact of labour migration on children left behind. The audience found itself divided into two camps. Some asserted that parents working abroad represented a ticket to a brighter future, enabling them to provide their children with education and the resources needed for a successful start in life. They argued that this newfound independence was a valuable life lesson. In contrast, an opposing viewpoint claimed that this forced transition into adulthood could exact a detrimental charge on a person's well-being. An acute

example was presented of a family where a mother had decided abroad for work, leaving her son in the care of an elderly grandmother. The teenager assumed the role of caregiver, ultimately affecting his academic pursuits.

During breaks for meals or coffee, participants naturally went to informal conversations, drawing upon their own professional experiences to discuss cases from life. This exchange of insights signified the acute relevance and urgency of the issue at hand. The prevalence of attitudes was that social workers had a wealth of knowledge to share, and a massif of insights to discuss, particularly in the context of children left behind by labour migration.

The all-embracing judgement that was repeated in all the trainings was that children from transnational families are mostly well-off and financially secure. The physiological needs of a child left behind are usually met, but the problem is that in society, emotional needs are often relegated to the background, if not ignored altogether. And as we know from many studies, healthy childhood development is impossible without an emotional component. Therefore, it is crucial to familiarise the family with the proper planning of travelling abroad, which would address not only legal aspects but also psychological ones. Training for social workers is an educational practice that influences the formation of a system of values in society. A social worker at his or her level should convey to families the importance of protecting the rights of children whose parents have left or are planning to leave abroad. It is expected that such families will be better prepared for such a life change as labour migration.

ROMANIA

Status: Concluded

Period: May 9–June 15, 2023; 17 November, 2023

Participants: 120 persons

Trainer: PhD. Habil. Ecaterina Balica is a scientific researcher, and associate professor within the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work (Bucharest University), the Higher School of Journalism, and some faculties with a technical profile within the Polytechnic University of Bucharest.

The purpose of the course: Improving the services offered by service providers (local, regional, and national authorities, non-governmental organisations) to members of transnational families from Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova in the destination countries through adequate information on the peculiarities of transnational families, the consequences of international migration on the members transnational families, needs and best practice models for data collection and services offered to migrant families in countries with migration experience (destination countries for migration flows).

Training objectives:

- O1. Informing the participants about the global, regional (Europe), and local (Ukraine, Republic of Moldova) trends and peculiarities of international migration for work (statistical data on international migration, the profile of the international migrant for work, etc.).
- O2. Increasing the level of information of service providers regarding the types of transnational families, the particularities and needs of transnational families in destination countries.
- O3. Informing service providers about the effects of international labour migration at the societal, community, and family level and on members of transnational families (children, parents, and other family members) in destination countries. Case study: Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.
- O4. Information on the potential risks to which members of transnational families are exposed (health problems, mental problems, violence, abuse, and human trafficking) in the countries of destination.
- O5. Information on best practice models for data collection on international labour migration and transnational families in countries of destination. Case study: Romania.
- O6. Information on best practice models in the field of services offered to transnational families in countries of origin and destination. Case study: Romania.

The course: The online course was structured on 7 teaching modules that represent important learning areas necessary to achieve the course objectives.

MODULE 1. International migration. Trends, migratory flows and the profile of migrants

- The participants were presented with information on the general context of international migration for work (trends, countries of destination and countries of origin, regional colour, particularities of migration from the European space, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova).

MODULE 2. The transnational family. Realities and myths

- The participants were informed about: the types of transnational families and the peculiarities of transnational families;
- The negative and positive effects of migration at the level of destination countries, at the level of communities, at the level of transnational families and at the level of each family member who emigrated or stayed at home;
- The needs of members of transnational families: the needs of children/adults/parents/grandparents/other relatives/elderly;
- The potential risks of labour migration for transnational families.

MODULE 3. Transnational families. Case study: Ukraine

Participants were informed about:

- The negative and positive effects of migration at the level of Ukraine, at the level of communities, transnational families and at the level of each family member who emigrated or stayed at home.
- The needs of members of transnational families in Ukraine: the needs of children/adults/parents/grandparents/other relatives.

Participants will be able to: develop measures at the national level regarding the reduction of the negative consequences of international migration on family members starting from the needs identified in the national studies on transnational families in Ukraine.

MODULE 4. Transnational families. Case study: Republic of Moldova

The participants were informed about the results of the research carried out within the CASTLE project regarding:

- The negative and positive effects of migration at the level of the Republic of Moldova, at the level of communities, transnational families, and at the level of each family member who emigrated or stayed at home;
- The needs of members of transnational families from the Republic of Moldova: the needs of children/adults/parents/grandparents/other relatives.

MODULE 5. Data collection on transnational families. Case study: Romania

The participants were informed about the data collection model regarding transnational families in Romania (history of implementation, structure of the collection system, institutions involved, difficulties).

MODULE 6. Public policies regarding transnational families – Romania

Participants were presented with:

- Intervention strategy and public policy development regarding transnational families;
- How to develop public policy projects focused on the needs of migrants and their families, starting from the Romanian experience.

MODULE 7. Services offered to families

The participants were presented with:

- the types of existing services, the types of services needed, the need for specialists, the amount of human and financial resources needed to provide the necessary services to members of transnational families;
- service projects/programs focused on the needs of migrants and their families, starting from the experience of other countries of origin.

Another session will be organised on 17 November 2023, to complete the number of participants.

Here are some comments from participants:

“I now have information about public policies on transnational families, the services offered to them in destination countries, and the effects of migration on them.”

“I believe that the data presented helped me to understand the phenomenon of migration and even if the data collected on the phenomenon was for some reasons not up to date due to the international context given by the war and are in a permanent change they have very well portrayed the situation of transnational families.”

Specific objective 3:

Transnational families and national stakeholders are better informed on the realities and practical issues related to labour migration.

A8. Training resources for transnational families

A8.1. Training for TF in countries of origin

MOLDOVA

Status: Ongoing

Under this initiative, labour migrant transnational family members residing in the countries of origin have been invited to participate in a comprehensive training course. In this sense, a public call was made to invite participants to subscribe to the training sessions.

To facilitate this training, a qualified expert/trainer was hired who have developed the training materials.

The training materials have been designed for trainers and educators who engage in parental education activities with parents. These materials aim to empower adults/parents in transnational families to effectively manage migration, thus preventing adverse effects and nurturing positive outcomes that contribute to the psycho-emotional well-being of children left behind.

These training materials are a valuable resource for teachers and educators in both schools and pre-schools. They can be used to organise targeted sessions with parents who are either planning to migrate or are currently working abroad. The training content is structured to be adaptable for both offline and online formats.

Due to low attendance of participants in online sessions, we have revisited our approach to the delivery of these sessions.

An upcoming training session for parents/caregivers who are members of transnational families is scheduled for November 9, 2023, with a group of transnational family members, as part of our ongoing activities.

UKRAINE

Status: On going

Do you consider starting work abroad and you are concerned about childcare and maintaining a strong connection with your child from afar? These are questions that often weigh on the minds of parents thinking about labour migration. Unfortunately, answers to such vital questions can be elusive.

Our recent training sessions were designed for transnational family members, where we aimed to bridge this knowledge gap and provide practical solutions. Throughout these engaging sessions, 48 parents and caregivers had the valuable opportunity to connect, share their experiences of parenting from a distance, engage in thought-provoking discussions, find answers to their queries, and enjoy mutual support over a cup of comforting coffee or tea.

Our training covered a range of essential topics, including:

- Exploring the concepts of transnational families, labour migration, and internal labour migration.
- Engaging in practical exercises to understand the reasons behind parents' decisions to work abroad, the consequences of such choices, and the challenges they encounter.
- Delving into decision-making processes through group discussions, featuring personal stories of individuals who opted for work abroad.
- Highlighting personal resources that empower adults to overcome difficulties and challenges, encouraging participants to share their existing coping strategies.
- Offering guidance on preparing a child for their parents' departure, emphasising the importance of understanding a child's needs and perceptions.
- Group discussions aimed at addressing crucial questions, such as childcare arrangements, the timing of informing children about parental intentions to work abroad, and children's reactions to parental absence.
- Providing recommendations on legal aspects in terms of child protection when parents are away, along with reminders of parents' legal responsibilities to their children.
- Facilitating conversations about effective long-distance communication with children and offering practical exercises to help participants develop communication strategies for children whose parents work abroad.

At the conclusion of each session, parents came together for a tea gathering to share their insights. Many expressed the benefits of these meetings, referring to the invaluable support from the group and a newfound appreciation for the knowledge gained, which they believe will contribute to more harmonious family relationships.

A9. Sharing of good practices between Ukraine, Moldova and Romania

MOLDOVA

Status:  **Completed**

On June 8, 2023, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, hosted an important “Conference that fostered collaboration among public institutions and academia from Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania.” The primary focus of this gathering was to exchange valuable insights and address the pressing challenges related to the protection of children left behind by parents working abroad. This collaborative effort is integral to the development and implementation of effective public policies aimed at improving the lives of these children and other members of transnational families.

The event in Chisinau brought together a range of key stakeholders, including representatives from state structures such as the Ministry of Labor, Migration, and Social Protection (MMPS), the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI), the Coordination and Response Action Plan (CRAP), the Bureau of Reintegration (BRD), the Child Advocate, and the National Agency for Social Assistance (ANAS). Furthermore, territorial child protection structures, including the Directorate for Social Assistance and Family Protection (DASPF) and the Department of Education (DE) from Moldova, played a pivotal role in the event. International delegations from the European Commission (EC), the European Union (EU), UNICEF, ICMPD, and IOM Moldova enriched the conference with their global perspective.

The conference had a total of **68 participants**, with **58 individuals attending in person** and an additional **10 participating online**. The discussions during the event focused on the growing phenomenon of children separated from parents who have migrated for work in foreign countries. This issue has gained significant attention, as governments seek sustainable solutions to address it. The migration of citizens from Eastern Europe to Western countries has seen a considerable increase over the last decade.

ROMANIA

Status:  **Completed**

Bucharest, 26 July 2023

The second International Conference “Children left at home. Good practices and challenges – Romania, Ukraine, Moldova” was held in Bucharest, Romania, on 26 July 2023.

The symposium brought together experts, practitioners, and policymakers to share insights and best practices. The event was structured around informative sessions and presentations, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and solutions in the field.

Dr. Viorela Telegdi-Csetri, the Project Manager at Babeş-Bolyai University, delivered the opening speech, setting the tone for the symposium. Her introduction provided context for the subsequent discussions, emphasising the significance of protecting children affected by labour migration.

Ahmed Sharmarke, ICMPD/MPF Representative

Following the introduction, Ahmed Sharmarke, Project Officer and representative of ICMPD/MPF, shared valuable insights into the broader context of international migration policies and their impact on children left behind.

Laura Sava-Ghica provided an overview of Terre des Hommes, shedding light on the organisation's mission and its commitment to addressing the challenges faced by children in the context of labour migration.

Dr. Anatolie Coşciug from the Center for the Comparative Study of Migration at Babeş-Bolyai University discussed Romania's role as a destination country for labour migration. His presentation delved into the complexities and implications of migration trends in the region.

The Ukrainian country team presented challenges in national policies for protecting children left at home due to labour migration. They outlined future actions to enhance the legislative framework and shared positive experiences in safeguarding these children.

This session focused on challenges encountered in Moldova's national policies for the protection of children left at home. Speakers from the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Academy of Economic Studies shared insights into the CASTLE project, emphasising the importance of effective protection strategies.

The Romanian session covered public policy recommendations, challenges in national policies, and the experiences of migrant parents.

The event concluded with an engaging question-and-answer session, allowing participants to seek clarification and exchange ideas. Dr. Viorela Telegdi-Csetri summarised the key points, and the symposium concluded with insightful conclusions, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts in safeguarding the well-being of children affected by labour migration.



The symposium was attended by 27 participants in person and 102 participants online.

Lisbon, 4–5 October 2023

The third International Conference “Children Left Behind. Best Practices of Protection and Challenges – Romania, Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova” was held in Lisbon, Portugal, between 4 and 5 October 2023.

Áron Telegdi-Csetri, Ph.D., Research Manager at Babeş-Bolyai University, initiated the event with an introduction to CASTLE, setting the stage for the day’s discussions. Online greetings followed from Cinzia Sechi, DG HOME, European Commission, and Jennifer Tangney, Senior Project Manager, representing ICMPD/MPF.

Áron Telegdi-Csetri, in his role as a researcher, presented public policy recommendations for public institutions in Moldova and Ukraine, emphasising the importance of thoughtful policies in addressing the challenges faced by transnational families.

Following the presentation, participants engaged in a lively question-and-answer session, delving deeper into the presented recommendations and exploring potential implementation strategies.

Viorela Telegdi-Csetri, Ph.D., Project Manager, and Mara Birou, Ph.D. student, presented key research findings on “Children Left Behind by Labor Migration,” focusing on supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian transnational families in the EU. The audience actively engaged in a question-and-answer session, demonstrating a keen interest in understanding the nuances of the research and its potential impact on policy.

Carlos Barros, Ph.D., from the Catholic University of Portugal, shared insights on navigating sensitivity and care for inclusive identities in transnational families, bridging the gap between generations and cultures.

The session concluded with a dynamic question-and-answer period, fostering a robust exchange of ideas and perspectives.

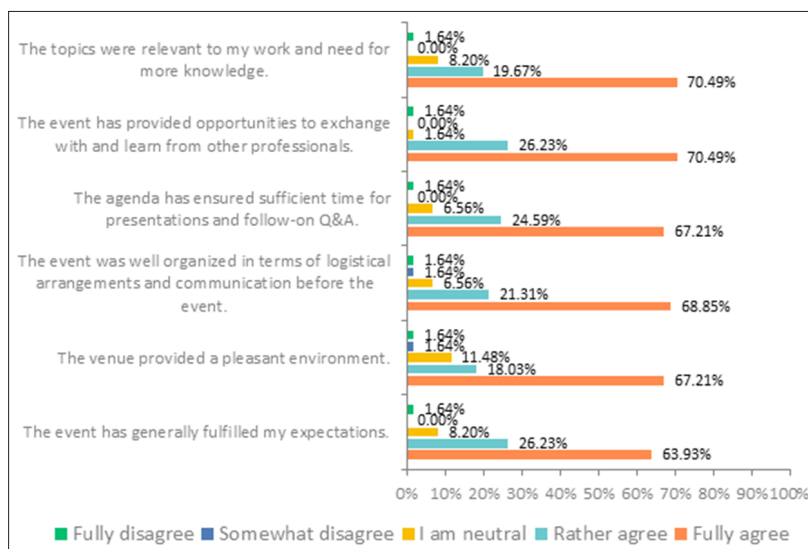
On the second day, country teams from Ukraine and Moldova presented best practices in protecting children left behind due to labour migration. Topics included the link between child well-being and migration policies, labour behaviour research, and positive experiences in child protection.

Tdh Romania team made a presentation of positive experiences and initiatives of the companies that can play a significant role in supporting employees who have children left behind due to migration for work. Miroslava Hreniuc, a young woman from a transnational family herself, spoke about the role of extracurricular activities in the process of accepting the “new normal” for children left at home in Moldova.

The day concluded with a comprehensive question-and-answer session, summarising key insights and closing remarks expressing gratitude for the invaluable contributions of participants.


The event successfully fostered collaboration, and shared knowledge, and highlighted effective strategies for supporting transnational families and protecting children affected by labour migration.

The conference had a total of **120 participants**, with **20 individuals attending in person** and an additional **100 participating online**. After the conference finished, participants completed an online survey that had the purpose of registering the participant’s level of satisfaction with the event. The survey had in total 76 respondents of which 31 of them were from Romania, 40 were from Moldova, and 5 of them from Ukraine. The conference had a diverse range of participants such as social workers from Romania, Ukraine and Moldova, researchers, academic and non-governmental professionals, students, community social workers, state child protection officers, etc.



Specific objective 4:
Children left behind and their families from Moldova and Ukraine are empowered to contribute to legal and policy reform on labour migration, with an emphasis on circular migration schemes and protection of children.

A10. Awareness raising campaign designed using participatory methods

MOLDOVA
 Status: Con  ed

For the implementation of the awareness-raising campaign, a consultant/trainer was engaged to facilitate training workshops based on the YouCreate Methodology. The objective was to work with groups of young leaders and provide guidance for the development and execution of civic initiatives within the framework of the YouCreate Campaign.

To engage communities effectively, a public call was issued to invite interested parties to participate. From the various initiatives submitted, 5 teams were selected to move forward with the program.

The training involved 10 teenagers and 5 teachers who received instruction in the YouCreate methodology. The primary focus was to empower young individuals with experience related to migration, particularly those whose parents work abroad. The goal was to equip them with the skills needed to develop and implement civic engagement initiatives. These initiatives encompassed peer-to-peer education, outreach activities, community projects, and more, all designed to address the needs of young people, including adolescents whose parents work abroad, within their respective communities.

The YouCreate CASTLE core team, comprising 10 youth/adolescents and 5 teachers, underwent training. This included 2 young individuals and a teacher from each initiative or community, totaling 15 participants from 5 different community initiatives. Subsequently, these core team members returned to their respective communities, where they conducted training sessions for the extended teams.

Within these extended teams, the participants identified the challenges related to migration prevalent in their communities. This local training effort engaged a total of **59 young people/adolescents** and **10 teachers**, all of whom were involved in the training sessions organised by the core team consisting of 10 youth and **5 trained teachers**. Once again, this provided an opportunity to identify and address the challenges associated with migration within the community.

Under the YouCreate CASTLE initiative, a total of **19 activities were conducted**, involving **267 pupils/young people**, **118 parents and caregivers**, and **30 teachers**. These activities encompassed a broad range of engagement within the community.

Upon completing the implementation of their initiatives, the YouCreate CASTLE core team participated in a Reflection and Evaluation Workshop that took place on 07 June 2023. During this session, the participants assessed their initial state, their knowledge of migration, and their project management skills at the beginning of the experience. They also reflected on their current state and how they envision their future development.

During the discussion, the participants reported a sense of accomplishment and pride in the results they achieved through the program. They expressed a heightened sense of responsibility to share their knowledge and experiences in the future. Testimonies from the participants revealed the transformative impact of the experience, particularly in altering their attitudes towards the phenomenon of migration and the children in their school who come from families with migrant parents.

“This experience brought us the most valuable result - the change of attitude towards the migration phenomenon and the children in the school who are from families with migrant parents.”

10.2.4 Campaign materials created (digital art, animations, brochures, etc.) and distributed

Under the 10.2.4 component of the project, various campaign materials have been created and distributed. Here's a summary of the campaign materials:

- Interactive materials about the main findings of the research;
- Technical policy advice;
- Curricula and training materials for service providers;
- Curricula and training materials for members of transnational families;
- Curricula and training materials for Media Professionals;
- You Create Methodology;
- Awareness Video;
- Brochure for members of transnational families;
- Brochure for child protection professionals;
- Good practices between Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania.

UKRAINE

Status:  **Completed**

10.2. Using the Terre des hommes “You Create – Methodology of Collaborative Research and Action to Develop Creativity and Change” methodology, we designed a program tailored to the needs of children and young people whose parents are engaged in labor migration to EU countries. Our approach actively involved young individuals in addressing critical issues associated with the challenges they encounter while their parents are abroad for work.

The initial phase involved the identification of schools with students whose parents were working abroad. Within these schools, we identified adult allies among the staff who shared a genuine interest and concern for the labor migration challenges faced by their students' families. These adult allies subsequently identified two student leaders from each school and began preparations for a comprehensive youth leader and adult ally training session using the “You Create – Methodology of Collaborative Research and Action to Develop Creativity and Change.” (YouCreate).

Our activity was implemented across five schools in the Ivano-Frankivsk region, with each school contributing five adult allies and ten youth leaders for the training, which took place in December 2022.

So, what was the training all about?

For our youth leaders, the training centred around the “YouCreate” methodology, which equipped them with the skills to:

- Assemble groups of young individuals who shared similar concerns.
- Release the creative potential of the youth within their communities and schools.

- Gather data and conduct research on the primary issues concerning young people, specifically within the context of their parents’ migration.
- Effectively address these concerns.
- Provide support and guidance to their youth groups.

Simultaneously, the “You Create” methodology empowered adult allies to:

- Offer effective support to the youth teams.
- Assist in establishing connections with school and community administrators.
- Contribute to the organisation of group meetings, including logistical arrangements and equipment provision.

Following the training, the youth teams collaborated for a period of five months to bring their creative ideas to life. In spring 2023, these teams, alongside their youth leaders and adult allies, gathered in Ivano-Frankivsk to present their innovative concepts, each with its unique conclusions, perspectives, presentation styles, and originality during Town-hall events, where we gathered authorities’ representatives and mass media professionals.

For instance, the Kolomyia team presented the video project “Illusion of Happiness,” shedding light on the loneliness experienced by teenagers whose families work in EU countries. The aim was to emphasise the importance of emotional support for young individuals during the transition from childhood to adulthood, fostering open communication among family members.

The Verkhnya team showcased their video project, “Captive to Their Own Illusions,” which employed theatrical performance to draw attention to the challenges faced by children of migrant workers, focusing on the loss of family bonds and values. Their project aimed to engage creative youth in various activities and highlight their creative potential and turn the situation around: not “children left behind” but “children in the centre of the process of decision making.”

The Dolyna team presented a short video research piece, delving into the circumstances of labour migration in their city. The objective was to understand the future aspirations of the city’s young population regarding work abroad.

Meanwhile, the Bohorodchany team offered a positive perspective on migration through their video initiative, demonstrating how it enables young people to pursue their dreams, engage in education, excel in sports, and acquire valuable resources. Their goal was to showcase that labour migration has positive outcomes as well.

In conclusion, the “YouCreate” methodology empowered adolescents to channel their creativity into initiatives that reflected their thoughts, opinions, and voices regarding labor migration and its consequences. Each initiative offered a unique perspective on this complex issue, showcasing the diverse range of ideas and insights of our youth leaders and their teams.



Children developing a creative idea

MOLDOVA

Status: Concluded

10.3.1 6 Brochures for transnational parents, children left behind due to labour migration, and child protection professionals produced in English, Romanian and Ukrainian and available online.

Status: Concluded

The brochures were meticulously crafted through the collaborative efforts of an expert/consultant and the team members of Tdh Moldova. Much of the information contained in these brochures has undergone revision, enhancement, and supplementation to ensure a comprehensive understanding and reflection of the migration phenomenon. These materials primarily focus on the situation of children left behind following their parents' departure to work abroad.

Brochure for Child Protection Professionals: This brochure serves as a valuable information resource for professionals in the field of child protection. Its purpose is to facilitate a deeper understanding of the circumstances surrounding children whose parents are working abroad and to guide professionals in taking appropriate actions on behalf of these children. By working together as a team, professionals can ensure the protection and well-being of children whose parents are working abroad.

Brochure for Members of Transnational Families: This brochure acknowledges the undeniable realities of migration and aims to provide guidance on building and maintaining quality relationships with children to mitigate negative effects. It emphasizes a seemingly simple yet intricate strategy that can be instrumental for parents: fulfilling children's needs. Regardless of their location, whether present or working abroad, all children have needs that, when met, contribute to their healthy development. In the case of children whose parents work abroad, certain needs become more pronounced, including the need for affection, approval, acceptance, safety, and protection. Authentic communication between parents and children is crucial for establishing a foundation of trust, built on understanding, esteem, honesty, and mutual interest. This brochure proposes several strategies for fostering co-presence in the child's life by comprehending and addressing the child's needs.

The design of these brochures drew inspiration from the materials collected during the "Families without Borders" campaign conducted by Terre des hommes Moldova in 2017. Additionally, insights gained from the Research component of the CASTLE project played a pivotal role in their development.

10.3.2 6 (3MD/3UA) Short news articles are written and shared on social media

Status:  Pending

Tdh Moldova Facebook account:

March, 14: trainings for parents announcement

March, 29: talk for parents with the psychologist Tatiana Turchină about how to prepare children for the parents leaving abroad to work

May, 16: post on participation at European Village on Europe Days mentioning CASTLE project (including photos with the roll-up)

June, 9: post about the international conference on good practices between Romania, Moldova and Ukraine

June, 22: trainings for journalists on reporting about transnational families

Tdh Moldova website:

March, 14: Trainings for parents: how to prepare children for their parents going abroad to work

June, 7: International Conference on good practices between Moldova, Ukraine and Romania:

1. News announcing the conference;
2. The Agenda of the Conference;
3. Study: How can children be supported after parents leaving abroad to work;
4. Romania, Moldova, Ukraine: good practices on protection of children left home by labour migration of their parents;

June, 16: Trainings for journalists on reporting about migration and transnational families.

Mass-media:

June, 8: JURNAL TV (national TV station): news about the international conference from June 7.

The awareness campaign is to take place that will involve a series of posts and news.

10.3.4 6 campaign videos created. 3 – UA; 3 – MD

Status: Ongoing

As part of the awareness campaign, an awareness video is in process of development. Thus, the video script has been developed, coordinated, and approved for production. This video serves as an important component of the project’s awareness-raising efforts, and it aims to effectively convey important messages to its target audience: mainly the parents that have to leave abroad to work. The awareness video will contain messages for parents about the best ways to prepare children about their leaving and long distance connection, communication and support for them. The video will come in three language versions.

UKRAINE

Status: Concluded

A10.3. Campaign on the topic of transnational families of labour migrants

In September, we started a dynamic campaign aimed at raising awareness about labour migration and its far-reaching consequences. Our preparations for this initiative began in tandem with the launch of our activities.

To provide a comprehensive view of our efforts and the impact we aim to make, we initiated the filming of various activities. This footage encompasses a wide spectrum, ranging from the engaging YouCreate training for youth to interactions with transnational families, government officials, service providers, and representatives from the media. Our goal is to compile these segments into a compelling video that vividly represents the work we're doing with these stakeholders.

Our campaign materials are extensive and suitable for different target groups. We've collaborated with our colleagues from Tdh Moldova in crafting several brochures, including one designed for professionals in protection and parents. We've also dedicated time and expertise to develop a specific brochure tailored for children.

These materials are information-rich, addressing a countless number of topics relevant to various audiences, including:

- Providing insights into current Ukrainian legislation.
- Offering practical approaches and valuable tips for effectively working with transnational families, encompassing assessments of family situations and the selection of suitable caregivers.
- Detailing step-by-step guidelines for parents departing abroad.
- Providing guidance on understanding and managing a child's emotions, preparing a child for their parents' departure, maintaining long-distance communication, and interpreting a child's emotional struggles from afar.
- Offering advice on staying connected with caregivers, raising a child across distances, planning for a future marked by separation, and resolving conflicts when miles apart.
- Outlining essential resources and contacts for children in need of support.

This impactful campaign is set to continue, maintaining its presence until the November. You can actively follow it on Tdh Ukraine and Tdh Moldova's social media channels, ensuring that you stay informed and engaged with our crucial mission to shed light on the realities of labor migration and its consequences.



A10.4. Media professionals are sensitised/ trained

MOLDOVA

Status: Concluded



Under component A10.4, a consultant/trainer has been engaged to develop a Handbook derived from the “*A Handbook on Migration Reporting for Journalists*” by ICMPD. This handbook, designed to bolster the skills and understanding of media professionals, has been used as a foundational resource for the project. Training workshops based on the handbook have been conducted, targeting groups of 15 communication specialists and students of journalism and communication sciences.

The material created by the consultant is tailored to suit a diverse audience, including communication specialists from various media platforms like written press, online press, TV, radio, blogging, and vlogging. Additionally, it caters to students pursuing journalism and communication sciences, particularly those who interact with transnational families in different regions of Moldova.

The process involved issuing a public call to invite participants to enrol in the training sessions. Subsequently, **15 communication specialists** have undergone two days of intensive in-person training that took place on 22 June and 29 June 2023.

These training sessions serve the essential purpose of providing practical insights and recommendations for enhancing media coverage of migration. Key aspects emphasised in the training include clarifying specific terminology, advocating for the respect of human dignity, countering hate speech, ensuring balanced and fair coverage, promoting evidence-based and factual reporting, and fostering the inclusion of migrant voices within

media narratives. The overarching goal is to elevate the overall quality and accuracy of media reporting concerning migration issues.

UKRAINE

Status: Concluded

Within the framework of the project “Children left behind – support for Moldovan and Ukrainian transnational families involved in labour migration in the EU” Terre des hommes in Ukraine invited regional journalists to participate in an online training on “Peculiarities of media coverage of issues related to migrants, refugees and IDPs”.

The training for journalists was divided into three blocks of two hours each and took place from May 24 to 26, 2023. The main objective of the training was to familiarise participants with the history of migration and legislative aspects; to address the issue of labour migration, current problems and diversity; and to provide recommendations for journalistic work in the context of migration.

We invited Victoria Kharchenko, a human rights activist and advocacy manager at Fight For Right, with whom we have worked in other projects, to be our trainer.

The training was held online, on the ZOOM platform. This format was due to the current insecure situation in the country, with frequent alarms and rocket attacks. Therefore, it was decided to move this training to an online format in order not to expose participants to danger. All participants registered through an online form, which we published along with the invitation on our Facebook and Instagram as well as on the website the Tdh in Ukraine. A total of 25 people registered for the training.

After registering, participants received links to all three days of the training and were able to join it. The following issues related to journalism during migration were covered during the three days:

Block 1: May 24, 2023 (16:00–18:00)

- History of migration: migration processes and factors of migration;
- Terminology. Why does what we say and how we say it matter?;
- How to speak ethically about migration-related topics? International and national standards;
- International and EU law in the field of asylum and migration.

Block 2: May 25, 2023 (16:00–18:00)

- Forms of migration: labour, family, refugees and asylum, IDPs, etc.;
- Consequences and management of migration: expulsion or deportation;
- Diversity and minorities: talking about gender, the LGBTQ+ community and the community of people with disabilities.

Block 3: May 26, 2023 (16:00–18:00)

- Interview: How to talk to people with traumatic experiences?;
- The path “from anecdote to genocide”: hate speech and migration;
- How to work with sources correctly when preparing a story? Analysing sources and engaging experts: pitfalls;
- Data journalism.

After completing the three days of training, participants received materials for review, video recordings of the training, and electronic certificates.

It was also interesting to know the participants’ opinions after the training, so some participants answered the question “What are the 3 most useful things you learned in this course?.”

“To prevent hate speech in journalistic activities; to understand vulnerable categories of the population; to deepen my understanding of the concepts of ‘migrant’, ‘refugee’, ‘IDP’.”

“For me, reminders and guidelines on consent to talk and use of data were important, and a reminder to refer to verified information and reports from the Ombudsman, fact-checking even on sensitive topics, was useful.”

Regarding the question of topics that were not covered in this course, we received the following feedback:

“1. Today, there are migrants from the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine. In the context of Russian journalism’s cancellation, they are not noticed. How do we talk about these Russians, or do we talk at all? 2. The war has driven many Ukrainians from their homes to other cities and places in Ukraine and abroad. In this situation, the elderly are the most vulnerable. Unfortunately, our society does not talk about this.”

“All important topics were covered,” “The course is quite broad.”

Some participants also shared their suggestions for improving the course:

“It would be interesting to consider specific cases of the impact of journalistic texts.”

“I want more courses on related topics.”

“A presentation with data visualisation would be good.”

The challenges we faced during the training included the security situation in the country, as well as a small number of people who are engaged in covering labour migration issues, as the media are currently focused on covering military operations, politics, and assistance from other countries.

On the other hand, we were able to attract a sufficient number of specialists who were interested in the topic of labour migration, not only local journalists, but also employees of higher education institutions (from the Department of Journalism) and representatives of NGOs, who asked many questions to the trainer and took an active part in the discussion.

ROMANIA

Status: **Concluded**

Event

Navigating Sensitivity in Journalism: Reporting on Transnational Families and Trauma

The Terre des hommes Foundation in Romania invited 22 journalists and students to an online and offline training to introduce the concept of “trauma-informed journalism”, supported by Éva László, psychologist, PhD in Sociology, university lecturer, director of the Department of Sociology and Social Assistance-LM, Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance, Babeş-Bolyai University. Eva Laszlo has participated in numerous research and intervention projects, the main areas of interest being: abuse/exploitation/neglect of minors; violence against women; victim protection; transnational families. She is a founding member of the Artemis Association of Women Against Violence and has been working in the field of victim protection for over 20 years. She worked in counseling centers for victims of violence, in the shelter for girls and young women—victims of sexual abuse and/or human trafficking, and in the shelter for women and children, victims of domestic violence. She participated as a collaborator/consultant in the making of two documentary films: *Hopes for Sale* (2012, director: Felméri Cecília) and *Too Close* (2022, director: Püsök Botond).

In the realm of journalism, the processes of documenting, interviewing, and publishing carry a weighty responsibility, particularly when dealing with individuals who have experienced trauma. This delicate relationship between the journalist and the interviewee requires a nuanced approach that balances the pursuit of truth with ethical considerations and legal safeguards.

Approaching Sensitive Topics:

1. Empathy and Respect

Journalists should approach sensitive topics with empathy and respect for the interviewee’s experiences. Establishing trust is paramount, as individuals sharing their stories often expose themselves to vulnerability.

2. Informed Consent

Obtaining informed consent is crucial. Journalists must clearly explain the purpose of the interview, potential implications, and the extent to which the information will be shared. This ensures transparency and allows interviewees to make informed decisions.

3. Trauma-Informed Reporting

Understanding the effects of trauma is essential. Journalists should be trained to recognize signs of distress and provide appropriate support. The goal is to minimise harm and ensure the well-being of those involved.

4. Legal Considerations

Journalists must navigate legal boundaries to protect themselves and their subjects. Adhering to privacy laws, especially when dealing with sensitive information, is essential. Striking a balance between transparency and legal compliance is key.

Avoiding Activism/Sensationalism and Truth/Moralizing Discourse:

1. Objectivity

Maintain journalistic objectivity by presenting facts without bias. While it's crucial to evoke empathy, journalists should refrain from advocating for specific causes or sensationalising stories to garner attention.

2. Ethical Reporting

Ethical reporting involves a commitment to truthfulness and accuracy. Journalists should resist the temptation to sensationalise stories for dramatic effect and avoid imposing moral judgments on the subjects.

3. Contextualization

Providing a broader context to the stories helps avoid oversimplification or moralising discourse. Understanding the complexities of the issues at hand ensures a more nuanced and accurate portrayal.

Reporting on Transnational Families:

Unique Research on Children Left Behind:

The report delves into the lives of transnational families, specifically parents who have migrated abroad and the children left behind in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Conducted by the Center for the Study of Transnational Families at Babeş-Bolyai University, this research sheds light on the challenges faced by these families, offering valuable insights into their experiences.

Conclusion:

In navigating the fine line between sensitivity and truth in journalism, a commitment to ethical practices, empathy, and legal compliance is essential. Reporting on sensitive topics, such as the lives of transnational families, requires a thoughtful approach that respects the dignity of those involved while upholding journalistic principles of truthfulness and accuracy.

The seminar was attended by 22 journalists from important written media and radio and students in journalism.