Recommendations for making policies more inclusive for transnational-families

KEY INSIGHTS WG 6

1 Put families at the centre of migration policy through a life-cycle approach

Recommendation: EU and national policies should adopt a family **life-cycle approach** that considers the needs and rights of all generations within a transnational family.

- Migration policies often focus on the individual migrant or on a particular moment in the migration process. Transnational families, however, experience migration across the life course: children may grow up with parents abroad, young adults may migrate themselves, parents may provide financial or care support across borders, and older relatives may become dependent on family members living elsewhere.
- Policies should therefore assess how migration and mobility affect children, parents, partners, older people and other dependent family members, rather than treating them as separate policy categories. This is consistent with the broader EU recognition that inequalities can accumulate across the life course and across generations
- This topic was the centre of discussion at the joint meeting with WG3 in May 2023: Dialogue between Migrant Families and Policies: The Life Course Perspective

Key message:

A transnational family should be seen as a family unit across borders, not simply as a collection of individual migrants.

2 Make family reunification a priority, not an afterthought

Recommendation: Family reunification should be treated as a fundamental component of sustainable migration and integration policies, with procedures that are accessible, timely and rights based.

As discussed in the TraFaDy family reunification workshop Budapest, family reunification is rooted in the right to respect for family life. Timely reunification can also contribute to psychological stability, labour-market participation and social inclusion. At the same time, increasingly restrictive and divergent national practices risk creating unequal access and legal uncertainty.

EU and national policies should therefore:

- reduce excessive administrative and financial barriers;
- avoid unnecessarily prolonged family separation;
- ensure that residence and family reunification rules do not create disproportionate dependency;
- promote greater coherence between Member States; and
- recognise family reunification as an investment in integration and family wellbeing, rather than simply an administrative migration procedure.

Key message:

Families should not choose between migration and family life.

3 Put the best interests of the child at the centre of every decision

Recommendation: The **best interests of the child** should be systematically assessed in migration, return, family reunification and social policies affecting transnational families.

- Children should not be considered merely as accompanying family members or dependants. Policies should recognise their agency, relationships and developmental needs, including when one or more parents live in another country.

- This means ensuring that children's views are heard in decisions affecting them and considering the consequences of family separation, reunification, relocation and return for their wellbeing, education, care and relationships.

- Key ethical guidelines of researching children were discussed at the synergies meeting with WG2 and WG5 in April 2025: *"Ethical Considerations in Researching and Working with Children in the TNF Context"*

Key message:

The impact of migration policy should be measured not only by its effect on migrants, but also by its effect on their children.

4 Recognise remittances as part of transnational family life—and strengthen financial literacy

Recommendation: Migration and development policies should **recognise remittances as an important component of transnational family wellbeing,** while ensuring that families have the knowledge and tools to manage them safely and effectively.

WG6's work highlighted the substantial role remittances play in supporting families' everyday needs, including food, healthcare and education. At the same time, high transaction costs and unequal access to financial infrastructure can reduce their impact.

Policies should therefore combine efforts to reduce remittance costs with:

- accessible financial-literacy programmes for migrant and transnational families;
- digital and financial literacy training;
- accessible and affordable formal financial services;
- better information about transfer options and costs; and
- measures addressing the particular barriers faced by families in rural or underserved areas.

WG6 policy brief on remittances was published in September 2026.

Key message:

Remittances are not just money transfers—they are part of how transnational families care for and support one another.

5 Apply a gender-equality lens to migration and transnational care

Recommendation: Gender equality should be systematically integrated into migration and transnational-family policies, with particular attention to **migrant women's economic independence, working conditions and care responsibilities.**

- Migrant women are frequently concentrated in care and domestic work, while simultaneously maintaining caring responsibilities towards family members in countries of origin. Policies should recognise this double or transnational burden of care.
- The EU's social-policy framework already identifies the unequal distribution of care responsibilities as a major factor affecting women's labour-market participation. It also recognises the importance of addressing long-term-care workforce challenges and the role of labour mobility in meeting care needs.
- WG6 contributed to the TraFaDy group focusing on the challenges of 24h live-in carers with migrant background and the policy brief which was published in this framework.

This should translate into:

- better recognition and protection of migrant care and domestic workers;
- recognition of skills and experience acquired through long-term care work;
- decent wages and working conditions;
- access to social protection;
- support for migrant women's economic independence; and
- policies that acknowledge the care they continue to provide to family members across borders.

Key message:

Europe's care systems should not depend on invisible or undervalued transnational care work.

6 Build policies around intersectionality and the most vulnerable families

Recommendation: Policies concerning transnational families should systematically apply an **intersectional approach**, recognising that migration can interact with gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, family status, socioeconomic position and other factors.

Particular attention should be paid to:

- LGBTQ+ migrants and families;
- migrant women;
- children and young people;
- persons with disabilities;
- older people;
- single-parent families;
- families experiencing poverty; and
- families in precarious or irregular situations.

The aim should be to ensure that policies do not assume a single model of the "migrant family". The European Pillar of Social Rights framework similarly emphasises the need to address overlapping inequalities and discrimination, including on grounds of disability, sexual orientation and racial or ethnic origin.

Key message:

There is no single transnational-family experience—and policies must be designed accordingly.

7 Make human rights the overarching framework—including in return policies

Recommendation: Human rights and the right to family life **should remain the overarching framework** for all policies affecting transnational families, including migration management and return.

Migration management should not be separated from fundamental rights. Decisions concerning return, detention, residence and family reunification can have profound consequences for family relationships, particularly for children and other dependent family members.

A rights-based approach should therefore ensure that:

- the right to family life is fully considered;
- the best interests of the child are assessed;
- family unity and separation are explicitly considered in individual decisions;
- proportionality is respected;
- procedural safeguards are effective; and
- vulnerable family members receive appropriate protection.

This is particularly important in the context of the **EU return framework**: efficiency in return procedures should not come at the expense of fundamental rights, family life or children's rights. In this regard, WG6 also published its first policy brief in October 2024 on the assessment of the Pact on Migration and Asylum: ***"Transnational Family Dynamics & the New EU Pact on Migration and Asylum"***

Key message:

Migration management must never lose sight of the people and families behind migration statistics and procedures.

8 Make transnational families visible in EU policymaking, data and impact assessments

Recommendation: Policymakers should systematically consider transnational families in policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, including through better data and stakeholder participation.

Transnational families often fall between policy silos: migration policy looks at migrants; social policy looks at residents; family policy looks at households; labour policy looks at workers; and development policy looks at remittances. Yet the same person—and the same family—may be affected by all these simultaneously.

The EU's renewed emphasis on monitoring inequalities, improving indicators and strengthening evidence provides an opportunity to make these families more visible in policymaking.

Key message:

If transnational families remain invisible in data and policy design, their needs will remain invisible in policy outcomes.

Summary of recommendations:

1. Life-cycle approach
Adopt a life-cycle approach that recognises the needs of all generations of transnational families. TNF need to be seen as a family unit across the borders.

2. Reunite families
Make timely, accessible and rights-based family reunification a priority of migration policy. Reduce excessive administrative and financial barriers; avoid unnecessarily prolonged family separation.

3. Best interest of the child
Make the best interests and voices of children central to decisions affecting transnational families. How reunification, separation, relocation and return affect their well-being.

4. Recognise transnational care and remittances
Support families' financial and care relationships across borders through financial literacy, affordable transfers and recognition of care work.

5. Gender-responsive migration policies
Protect migrant women, strengthen their economic independence and recognise the contribution of migrant care workers.

6. Leave no transnational family behind
Apply an intersectional approach, with particular attention to LGBTQ+ migrants, women, children, persons with disabilities and single-parent families.

7. Put human rights first
Ensure that migration management, including return, fully respects family life, children's rights, dignity and fundamental rights.

8. Make transnational families visible on the policy level
Integrate a transnational-family perspective into EU and national policymaking, data collection, impact assessments and monitoring. TNF is not an issue, but a way of living and policies should help them in every field of life and ensure reunification.

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