



CASTLE: Empowering transnational families and children left behind

Across Moldova and Ukraine, countless families navigate the complexities of parental migration. For the children from migration affected families, this reality brings both challenges and opportunities. This is why it is important to bring children's voices and experiences to the forefront, helping to improve lives and influence change for transnational families. The CASTLE project worked to empower these families, foster resilience, and drive policy change through innovative initiatives like youth-led research and creative empowerment programmes.

Discovering strength through research

Welcoming of YouCreate workshop participants



One of CASTLE's most effective approaches was involving children as co-researchers in a study about transnational families, ensuring that the perspectives of 'children left behind' were at the forefront of policy recommendations. For a young Moldovan project participant whose parents worked abroad during her childhood, this approach was transformative. As a co-researcher, she explored the complexities of life as part of a transnational family, uncovering both personal insights and professional inspiration.

"[I am] now in college, having had clear examples provided by the CASTLE team I know things about research, about how a study should be done correctly. I can say that this experience influenced me in choosing the field of study", she stated. Her work, alongside other youth researchers, highlighted a critical truth: children affected by parental migration are not just passive observers but active contributors to family life. Their resilience, adaptability, and insights are vital to understanding the transnational experience of families.

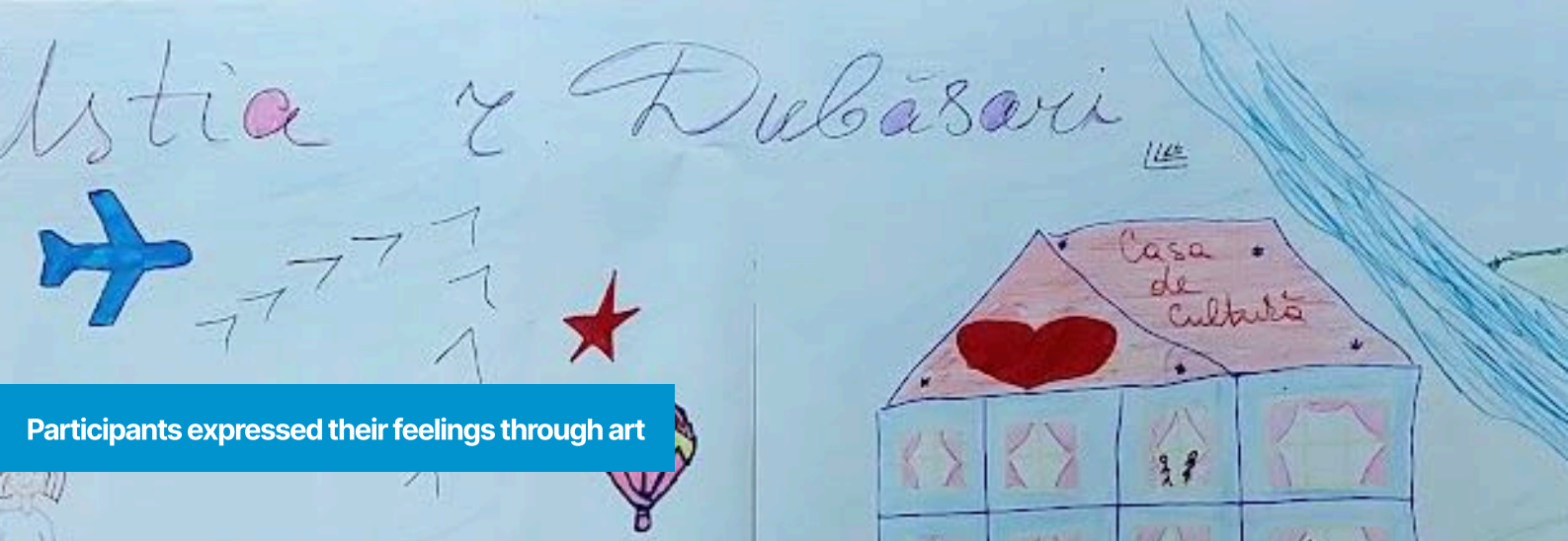
Creativity as a path to connection

The CASTLE project adopted a YouCreate approach which became its cornerstone. Rooted in five pillars—safety, relationships, purpose, justice, and hope—this approach fostered leadership and understanding among children affected by migration. It provided a platform for engaging with young people in the community, fostering greater understanding and building stronger relationships within families and beyond. "This approach is necessary, and the fact that this happens here [in Moldova] involving young people from the community seems a good idea to me", said a YouCreate trainer. Through YouCreate, youth used creative expression to address bullying, build social cohesion, and strengthen family ties, fostering understanding of the topic and unity within their communities.



A journey toward empathy

Another project beneficiary from Ukraine spent years grappling with her father's absence as a labour migrant. Through YouCreate approach, the CASTLE project provided her with tools to process these emotions, transforming her perspective and family dynamics. "Before, I used to get angry because I didn't understand why he [my dad] is not with us and I see him only a few times a year. The project helped because I began to understand his motivation. I began to realise both the advantages and disadvantages of labour migration. Thanks to my dad, me and my brothers are able to study at university, I have a chance to do dance classes, I have a mobile phone and a very well-equipped room at home," said the project beneficiary, whose newfound understanding fostered deeper empathy within her family, helping her support her mother and recognise the shared challenges they all face.



Participants expressed their feelings through art

A legacy of change

CASTLE bridged communication gaps for transnational families and helped children understand their parents' sacrifices, fostering empathy, and strengthening bonds. Youth participants became leaders, defying migration stereotypes as co-researchers who contributed unique insights and advocated for change. Their stories have the power to inspire and inform policy reforms in Moldova and Ukraine, creating a lasting impact on transnational families and national frameworks

About the MPF

This grant project was part of the EU-funded Migration Partnership Facility (MPF), managed by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) to support the external dimension of the EU's migration policy. MPF grants fund projects that promote dialogue and cooperation on migration and mobility between EU Member States and partner countries outside the EU.

About the project

The project 'Children Left Behind by Labour Migration: Supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian Transnational Families (Castle)' in the EU' was running from June 2021 to December 2023. It was implemented in Ukraine, Moldova and Romania and led by the Centre for the Study of Transnational Families from Babeş-Bolyai University in Romania, in collaboration with Terre des Hommes in Moldova and Ukraine, the Ukrainian Institute for Social Research after Oleksandr Yaremenko, and the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova.

About the evaluation

Testimonies used in this document were gathered as part of the final evaluation of the project 'Children Left Behind by Labour Migration: Supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian Transnational Families in the EU (Castle)' conducted between June and October 2024. The evaluation was led by Blomeyer & Sanz who makes part of a consortium of six consultancies and NGOs, namely Blomeyer & Sanz, Diversity Development Group, Migration Policy Group, Policy Impact Lab, Samuel Hall and Tandans.



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