TRANSNATIONAL CARE ACROSS BORDERS

summer school 2025 – CA21143: TraFaDy
Transnational Family Dynamics in Europe

When? 30 June – 9 July, Brussels
Where? Odisee Campus Schaarbeek, Huart Hamoirlaan 136, 1030 Schaarbeek
(unless mentioned differently)

FIRST WEEK (30.06.2025 – 04.07.2025)

MON 30.06	09:00 – 09:30	**Reception of the participants** with tea and coffee.
	09:30 – 10:00	**General introduction and welcoming words** ▪ **Mariola Kapidani,** Science Officer COST Association (Belgium) ▪ **Merel Van Hove**, coordinator of this summer school (Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Belgium)
	10:00 – 12:30	**LECTURE:** Transnational families: reasons and effects of physical separation of migrant parents and their children in the countries of origin, **by Karlijn Haagsman (University of Maastricht**)
	12:30 – 13:30	**Lunch**
	13:30 – 15:00	**DOCUMENTARY:** 'My land is burned', followed by a debate with **Abdul Alshowaiki (director of the documentary)**
	15:00 – 15:15	**Break**
	15:15 – 17:00	**STUDENT PROJECT:** getting to know each other and sharing information (*only for those participating in the student project*)
	17:00 – 19:00	**INFORMAL OPENING EVENING** with Belgian beer, soda, fries and waffles *(no obligation)*

TUE 01.07	09:00 – 09:30	**Reception of the participants** with tea and coffee.
	09:30 – 10:45	**LECTURE:** Ethical considerations in addressing challenges with vulnerable populations: the case of migrant children, **by Eglantina Dervishi (University of Tirana, Albania)**
	10:45 – 11:00	**Break**
	11:00 – 12:30	**WORKSHOP:** Mixed methods research on transnational families: Intergenerational communication, socio-emotional well-being and care, **by Sviatlana Karpava (University of Cyprus)**
	12:30 – 13:30	**Lunch**
	13:30 – 17:00	**FIELD VISITS IN BRUSSELS** (1) Fedasil Schaarbeek (2) Klein Kasteeltje / Little Castle (Fedasil) (3) MigratieMuseumMigration

WED 02.07	09:00 – 09:30	**Reception of the participants** with tea and coffee.
	09:30 – 12:30	**LECTURE:** Gendered division of labor: Recruiting female migrants for the informal care sector, **by Mirza Emirhafizović (University of Sarajevo, Bosnia)**
	12:30 – 13:30	**Lunch**
	13:30 – 15:00	**LECTURE:** Remittances and the effect on transnational families, by **Mélissia Mabrouka Petesque (IOM Belgium & Luxembourg)**
	15:00 – 15:15	**Break**
	15:15 – 16:30	**LECTURE:** Psychosocial care and services for children in transnational migrant families, **by Aleksandar Bozic (University of Stavanger, Norway)**

THU 03.07	09:00 – 09:30	**Reception of the participants** with tea and coffee.
	09:30 – 10:45	**LECTURE:** Family Group Conference and empowering transnational family ties, **by Aleksandar Bozic (University of Stavanger, Norway)**
	10:45 – 11:00	**Break**
	11:00 – 12:30	**WORKSHOPS** (1) The use of family photography in social research, by **Lieve Willekens** (2) Working with diverse families: building trust and understanding through dialogue, by **Kim Lecoyer (Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Belgium)**
	12:30 – 13:30	**Lunch**
	13:30 – 17:00	**FOCUS GROUPS (AND STUDENT PROJECT)**, led by (1) **Kim Lecoyer** (Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Belgium) (2) **Aleksandar Bozic** (University of Stavanger, Norway) (3) **Mirza Emirhafizović** (University of Sarajevo, Bosnia)

FRI 04.07 *Visit to Antwerp*	Everyone may track directly to Antwerp Central (train station) We will **meet at the ticket office hall at 10:00**	
	11:00 – 12:30	**VISIT 1:** Red Star Line Museum
	12:30 – 14:45	**Lunch** *(on own account)*
	15:00 – 17:00	**ACTIVITY** (1) Creative workshop: Homesickness and the impact of migration, by **Nadia Babazia (Red Starline Museum)** (2) CAW, Migration Advice Centre

SECOND WEEK (07.07.2025 – 09.07.2025)

MON 07.07	09:00 – 09:30	**Reception of the participants** with tea and coffee.
	09:30 – 10:45	**WORKSHOP:** Community-based mental health care for young refugees: innovative practices, **by Lies Misotten and Lucia De Haene (KU Leuven, Belgium)**
	11:30 – 11:45	**Break**
	11:00 – 12:30	**WORKSHOPS** (1) Understanding *parentification* in transnational refugee families, **by Kaat Van Acker, Margot Lavent, Yasmine Rishmawi & Mieke Groeninck (Odisee University of Applied Sciences & KULeuven, Belgium)** (2) *tbc*, **by Katja Fournier (Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Belgium)** (3) Racism-pain through the lens of families & generations, **by Birsen Taspinar (Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Belgium)**
	12:30 – 13:30	**Lunch**
	13:30 – 15:00	**LECTURE:** Transnational families as a constitutive element in maintaining liveable lives in depopulating areas, **by Aija Lulle (University of Eastern Finland)**
	15:00 – 15:15	**Break**
	15:15 – 16:30	**WORKSHOP:** Role of care in transnational families with students in two or more countries, **by Aija Lulle (University of Eastern Finland)**

TUE 08.07	09:00 – 9:30	**Reception of the participants** with tea and coffee.
	9:30 – 12:30	**WORKSHOP**: Mind the gap - Exploring international female students' challenges and experiences associated with transnational intergenerational care in the post-Covid-19 era, **by Eleni Melatiadou (London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom)**
	12:30 – 13:30	**Lunch**
	13:30 – 15:00	**STUDENT PROJECT**
	15:00 – 15:15	**Break**
	15:15 – 16:30	**STUDENT PROJECT**

WED 09.07	09:00 – 09:30	**Reception of the participants** with tea and coffee.
	09:30 – 12:30	**LECTURE:** Caring at a distance - Transnational care circulation by separated migrant families, **by Pascal Debruyne (Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Belgium)**
	12:30 – 13:30	**Lunch**
	13:30 – 15:00	**Evaluation and ending**

CONTENT OF THE LECTURES

Transnational families: reasons and effects of physical separation of migrant parents and their children in the countries of origin (Monday 30.06, 10:00 – 12:30)

by Karlijn Haagsman (University of Maastricht, the Netherlands)

This lecture will give you an introduction to transnational families and discuss the main findings within this field. First, we need to discuss what transnationalism is before we can understand what transnational families are. Second, it will discuss the different forms of transnational families you can look at and reasons for these different forms of transnational family life. Finally, it provides an overview of the main findings within this field, e.g. what are the effects of separation between migrant parents and their children in the country of origin on the well-being of parents and children; and how are elderly impacted whose children have migrated.

In discussing these effects and causes, we are paying specific attention to demographic and structural factors that shape these, such as gender and socioeconomic status.

Ethical considerations from the psychological perspective in addressing challenges with vulnerable populations (Tuesday 01.07, 09:30 – 10:45)

by Eglantina Dervishi (University of Tirana, Albania)

This lecture will focus on the ethical responsibilities of working with vulnerable groups, particularly migrant children with limited access to information and language barriers. Egla will focus on the role of researchers in conducting studies involving vulnerable populations, and professionals providing direct assistance in shelters and care centers.

The presentation will address critical ethical concerns such as informed consent, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, power dynamics, and trauma-informed care, all with care and respect for the dignity of migrant people.

Gendered division of labor: Recruiting female migrants for the informal care sector (Wednesday 02.07, 09:30 – 12:30)

by Mirza Emirhafizović (University of Sarajevo, Bosnia)

Several interconnected issues related to the recruitment of female migrants in the informal care sector, particularly in Europe, will be explored. As the population ages and the cost of institutional care for older individuals, especially those with disabilities, becomes increasingly expensive, many families turn to hiring women from low-income countries to provide domestic care.

This strategy is driven by factors such as the high cost of institutional care, women's career commitments, and the affordability of migrant labor. In some cases, this trend also applies to families seeking care for minor children. However, while these female migrants provide essential care abroad, their own children are often left behind, producing another layer of complexity in this migration pattern. The demand for affordable care has created a market where women from poorer countries or lower-income states provide domestic labor in exchange for low wages.

Through this interactive lecture and workshop, we will analyse the migration patterns and gendered division of labor that emerge from this dynamic. We will examine the experiences of both families who rely on informal care and the female migrants who provide it, shedding light on the complex intersections of gender, migration, labor, and family separation within the domestic sector.

Remittances and the effect on transnational families (Wednesday 02.07, 13:30 – 15:00)

by Mélissia Mabrouka Petesque (IOM Belgium & Luxembourg)

tbc

Psychosocial care and services for children in transnational migrant families (Wednesday 02.07, 15:15 – 16:30)

by Aleksandar Bozic (University of Stavanger, Norway)

Transnational family processes present challenges for children, who face separation from parents due to distance and borders, impacting welfare policy and practice (Mazzucato & Ditto, 2018). These children may encounter multifaceted challenges related to parental separation, language barriers, and cultural adjustment. Public service professionals may lack the expertise or face legal and policy constraints in meeting their specific needs.

To address these issues, it will be presented findings from an analysis of 134 publications that explore trends in research on psychosocial care and services for children left behind or on the move due to transnational migration.

Family Group Conference and empowering transnational family ties (Thursday 03.07, 09:30 – 10:45)

by Aleksandar Bozic (University of Stavanger, Norway)

Supporting children and families from minority or migrant backgrounds demands culturally sensitive and competent child welfare practitioners, capable of implementing interventions that enhance users' participations in decision-making processes. The lecture will delve into the Family Group Conference (FGC), a preventive model widely implemented across Europe in work with children, young people and families at risk.

We will discuss how FGC facilitates intercultural perspectives and empowers the inclusion and participation of children, families and extended social network across boarders in decision-making processes tailored to their specific needs. We will also explore transnational aspect of FGC, highlighting its core principles, practical applications in and research findings on its effectiveness.

Transnational families as a constitutive element in maintaining liveable lives in depopulating areas (Monday 07.07, 13:30 – 15:00)

by Aija Lulle (University of Eastern Finland)

tbc

Caring at a distance: transnational care circulation by separated migrant families (Wednesday 09.07, 09:30 – 12:30)

by Pascal Debruyne (Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Belgium)

Migration means mobility, moving from one place to another, often crossing borders. But it doesn't always mean mobility for all. Only one or some family members cross borders, in seek of opportunities that match aspirations or meets the needs for safety and protection. Still, in social work realities of transnational families and practice of care from a distance, aren't part and parcel of their everyday practice in terms of interventions and guiding principles that underpin them.

In this lecture, we look at different research projects of family reunification of refugees, mobile EU-citizens that beg as a means of income in Brussels and undocumented families. Moving from analysis to practice, we explore opportunities and strategies of intervention for social professionals in times of transnational migration.

CONTENT OF THE WORKSHOPS

Mixed methods research on transnational families: Intergenerational communication, socio-emotional well-being and care (Tuesday 01.07, 11:00– 12:30)

by Sviatlana Karpava (University of Cyprus)

Transnational family studies, which have emerged from migration studies and anthropology since the 2000s, focus on the dynamics of long-distance transnational family relations (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002). Researchers investigating transnational families have explored various topics, such as the impact of information and communication technologies on sustaining transnational ties (Madianou, 2012), the significance of gifts and remittances in nurturing affective relationships and care within transnational families (Parreñas, 2005; Baldassar & Merla, 2014), and the dynamics of courtship over long distances (Hannaford & Foley, 2015).

Since the late 2000s, new trends and topics in the research of transnational relationships have emerged, including power dynamics, translocality, the circulation of care, reverse remittances, affection, as well as tensions and misunderstandings within transnational families (Cole & Groes, 2016; Dankyi et al., 2017; Palash & Baby-Collin, 2018). Researchers employ a mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis, combining quantitative and qualitative methods with observational and in-depth interview techniques to understand the dynamics of maintaining kinship ties across distances. They investigate how various factors, including reciprocal flows of care, material and emotional resources, miscommunication, and tensions, influence these relationships (Poeze et al., 2016; Wissink & Mazzucato, 2018).

This workshop will focus on mixed methods approaches to studying transnational families at micro, meso, and macro levels. Participants will gain both theoretical and practical insights into various research methodologies, techniques, and tools for data collection and analysis, considering the complexity of the issues being explored, the factors involved, and the different populations studied.

The workshop will address multimodal and art-based research methods with transnational families, including both cross-sectional and longitudinal comparative studies, with an emphasis on care and support, socio-emotional well-being, family language policy, and intergenerational communication. Additionally, the presenter will discuss topics such as digital literacy, multimodality, education and intercultural mediation in transnational families.

The use of family photography in social research (Thursday 03.07, 11:00 – 12:30)

by Lieve Willekens

What can family pictures tell us? What do they represent? And how can they deliver interesting data for research?

In this workshop we look at family photography as a source of information about people's lives. How do people use their snapshots to construct and reconstruct their memories and their identity?

Please bring a few family pictures of yourself to the workshop!

Working with diverse families: building trust and understanding through dialogue (Thursday 03.07, 11:00 – 12:30)

by Kim Lecoyer

How to transcend clashing norms and values in the face of cultural, religious and other differences? How to build bridges with transnational families through (intercultural) dialogue and how to strengthen our diversity competences, especially in situations of conflict? This workshop will stretch your comfort zone and strengthen your capacity to deal with a wide range of human differences.

In this inspirational workshop, you will discover two scientifically supported frameworks for social intervention. On the one hand, we reflect on the necessary strength-based ground attitude (in 3 gears) of diverse-responsive partnership (‘exploring together in dialogue’). However, sometimes we are confronted with situations where this ground attitude is not enough. In those cases we need a framework that provides guidelines and tools to deal with complex cases and ethical dilemmas; you’ll be introduced to the "circles of motives".

Community-based mental health care for young refugees: innovative practices (Monday 07.07, 9:30 – 10:45)

by Lies Misotten and Lucia De Haene

tbc

Understanding *parentification* in transnational refugee families
(Monday 07.07, 11:00 – 12:30)

by Kaat Van Acker, Margot Lavent, Yasmine Rishmawi & Mieke Groeninck

From previous research and training sessions (Groeninck et al., 2019; Fournier et al., 2022), we know that professionals working with refugee families often raise questions about what they refer to as 'parentification'—a term widely discussed in psychology which, in its classical sense, refers to changes in family dynamics where children take on parental responsibilities, and the boundaries between parent and child become blurred (Lutman, 2019). In the literature, the concept sometimes carries a more descriptive meaning, referring to the emotional, practical, and logistical tasks and roles that children take on—tasks traditionally expected of parents (Jurkovic, 1997). At the same time, it can have a more psychological interpretation, where parents project unmet needs onto the child (Boszormanyi-Nagy & Spark, 2014).

Professionals express concerns about the development, identity, and well-being of minors who take on parental roles such as caring for siblings, translating during interactions with official institutions, and financially supporting family members (even from a distance).

These concerns are fueled by existing knowledge on parentification, which originated in a Western context and primarily describes the long-term negative effects on the child (Jurkovic, 1997).

This workshop seeks to deconstruct and contextualize evolving roles, responsibilities, tasks, and caregiving practices within (transnational) refugee families. Drawing on ongoing qualitative research—including 15 in-depth case studies of refugee families (10) and unaccompanied minors (5) residing in Belgian asylum reception centers over the course of a year—we adopt a lived-experience approach to understanding these shifts.

We emphasize that changes in family dynamics must be interpreted through the meanings, knowledge, and experiences that refugee families themselves bring with them (Lansford & Bornstein, 2020). These dynamics unfold within a structurally complex environment: the asylum reception center, which functions as a total institution—at once public and private, supportive and controlling, temporary in theory but often stable in practice. Importantly, we explore how this institutional setting imposes both visible and invisible borders, reflecting broader patterns of structural violence and neocolonial governance. Within this ambiguous and constrained space, families are expected to 'do family'—to maintain cohesion, care, and continuity—while navigating limited agency and uncertain futures.

We provide rich examples of how families experience 'parenting' and growing up before and after fleeing, shaped by their sociocultural backgrounds, personal experiences, and current living conditions—and how, in that light, they make sense of changes in roles, tasks, responsibilities, and caregiving. From this diverse-sensitive meaning-making, we offer points of connection for family support.

tbc (Monday 07.07, 11:00 – 12:30)

by Katja Fournier

tbc

Racism-pain through the lens of families & generations (Monday 07.07, 11:00 – 12:30)

by Birsen Taspinar

Racism-pain has an impact on children, their families and generations. It has an impact on the physical, psychological and emotional well-being. It seems that when parents talk with their children about racism experiences, that the risk of depression is significantly less in their adult lives.

How can families talk about racism-pain, in a strengthening way? And which are the coping mechanisms families have developed through generations? The trauma-growth through the learning processes after racism experiences? Dealing with this topic means that we have to think about a collective mental health awareness, working with more generations and looking to new ways of helping people deal with racism-pain too.

Role of care in transnational families with students in two or more countries (Monday 07.07, 15:15 – 16:30)

by Aija Lulle (University of Eastern Finland)

tbc

Mind the gap - Exploring international female students' challenges and experiences associated with transnational intergenerational care in the post-Covid-19 era (Tuesday 08.07, 9:30 – 12:30)

by Eleni Melatiadou (London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom)

Higher education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK have recently welcomed an increasing number of international students - especially women - who face numerous challenges as they have to leave their families (minor children and aging parents) behind physically, but maintain contact digitally.

The current study, we want to explore together with you, aimed to: (a) explore the experiences and more specifically the barriers female international students living in transnational families (TNFs) face in the post-COVID-19 era as they try to balance their caring responsibilities and their studies, and (b) unravel how HEI can support female international students living in TNFs.

This comparative study used a mixed methods approach. The research team collected data from 60 female international students studying in the UK and Turkey using semi-structured interviews and an online survey. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative findings of the study. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative findings of the project. The current study unveiled the gendered challenges, (e.g., academic, personal, digital, and professional) female international students living in TNFs face. It also offers recommendations on how HEIs can support these students and facilitate communication with their families as HEIs need to cater to their international students and their families' well-being and mental health.

VISITS TO KEY ORGANISATIONS

Fedasil (*) centre Schaarbeek

Fedasil took over the former hotel 'Lambermont 322' in Schaarbeek in 2023 to set up shelters for unaccompanied foreign minors. The site accommodates 70 young people (mostly boys, between 14 and 18 years old) who attend school in the Brussels region. In Schaarbeek, only unaccompanied minors are accommodated, no adult residents. These are mainly boys, who have arrived in our country without parents or a guardian.

The reception centre not only provides basic daily needs (such as shelter, food and clothing), the youngsters also receive social, legal and medical assistance. The youths attend school in the Brussels region and participate in activities aimed at fostering their autonomy and integration into society .

Details of the Fedasil centre: Fedasil Schaerbeek
Boulevard Lambermont 322
1030 Schaerbeek
official website: www.fedasil.be

Little Castle / Klein Kasteeltje (Fedasil (*))

The Little Castle / Klein Kasteeltje is the oldest (and largest) reception centre located in the heart of Brussels. In 2018, the Little Castle was transformed from a regular reception centre into an application centre. From then on, it has functioned as Belgium's primary arrival centre for individuals seeking international protection.

Since 2022, applicants for international protection no longer register their asylum applications at the Application Centre, but at the registration centre of the Immigration Department on Pacheco Avenue.

Details of the Fedasil Centre: Fedasil Arrival Centre – Klein Kasteeltje
Negende Linielaan 27
1000 Brussels
official website: www.fedasil.be

(*) **Fedasil (the Federal Agency for the reception of asylum seekers)** is responsible for the reception of applicants for international protection and other target groups and guarantees high-quality reception and conformity within the various reception structures. Fedasil coordinates the various voluntary return programmes.

During these visits, we will see how people who have recently arrived in Belgium and are seeking international protection live. This visit can thus be very powerful and at times confronting. At the same time, we will also see the dedication of the staff who are doing their utmost to provide support.

We kindly ask you to approach this visit with openness, respect, and empathy. This is a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the human stories behind migration and asylum policy, not a sightseeing tour. If you have any questions or feel the need to talk during or after the visit, please don't hesitate to reach out. We will provide a moment to reflect afterwards, if needed.

MigrationMuseummigration

The MigratieMuseumMigration gives a permanent home to the stories of the first generation of guest workers, earliest inhabitants of the Little Castle, expats, war refugees, the Europeans who move freely within the EU and many others. It emphasizes their personal stories through photographs, artifacts and multimedia installations.

Visiting the MigratieMuseumMigration offers a profound insight into the diverse narratives that constitute Brussels' identity, fostering a deeper understanding of migration's role in shaping societies. It is located in the centre of Brussels, in Molenbeek, a district known for its cultural diversity.

Details of the MigratieMuseumMigration:
Rue des Ateliers 17
1080 Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, Brussels
official website: mmm.brussels

Red Starline Museum

The Red Star Line Museum is located in the authentic buildings of the historic shipping company ‘the Red Star Line’, where, between 1873 and 1934, almost 2 million European emigrants boarded the company's ocean steamers, hoping for a better life across the ocean. In times of xenophobia and polarisation there is an urgency to reflect about our role in society. Our relevance lies in bridging past and present for a broad audience and being a safe place of resilience for migrants today.

The Red Star Line Museum tells a universal story of hope, dreams and the quest for happiness, based on personal stories of 20th-century emigrants. Starting from the historical story of European emigration via Antwerp to America, they, together with visitors, witnesses and partners, encourage reflection and dialogue about migration in the past, present and future.

The Red Star Line Museum cherishes and preserves history and does so based on personal stories of migrants. They connect their life stories with current social issues through recognisable themes.

Details of the museum:
Red Star Line Museum
Montevideostraat 3
2000 Antwerpen
official website: www.redstarline.be