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SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE INTRA-EU MOBILITY

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Objective of the paper

- * The current work is focused on the social aspects of the intra-EU migration (mobility) and is based on recent studies and official statistical data about the intra-EU migration of children and the risks for their development. The main observations on this topic are compared with the results from authors' studies focused on children from so called transnational families – the family units where one or both parents are labour migrants while their children are left in the country of origin to the care of relatives.

Main concepts defined in the theoretical part of the paper

- * Migrant;
- * Intra-EU migration (mobility);
- * Intra-EU migrant;
- * Intra-EU migrant-child;
- * Children in migration;
- * Transnational family;
- * Transnational motherhood;
- * Transnational fatherhood

Method

* One of the methods used in this work is a secondary data analysis of the results from the report “Data on Children in Migration” of the Joint Research Centre to the European Commission (Schumacher et al., 2019). These officially published data are compared with the results from two UNICEF studies and an own study of the co-authors where two qualitative methods are combined: in-depth interviews and focus group.

Conclusions based on the official data in the report “Data on Children in Migration” of the Joint Research Centre to the European Commission (Schumacher et al., 2019)

- * The intra-EU mobility affects a large number of children aged 0-19 years - approximately 2,6 million or 2,7 % of the total population in this age group.
- * The predominant direction of the intra-EU mobility is from East to West, i.e. from the new member states from Eastern and partially Central Europe to the old ones from Western and Northern Europe.
- * The orientation of the migration flows to the most developed countries identifies some of the reasons for intra-EU mobility – seeking for higher incomes, living standard and better long-term perspectives. In some cases, the reasons are connected with the better education of the children.
- * The biggest sources of the intra-EU mobility are Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. The migration to the West causes serious demographic problems for these countries such as: depopulation, population aging and, hence, significant economic problems – shrinking labour market, brain drain and others.

Conclusions based on two UNICEF studies about the risks for the children from migrant-families (transnational families)

- * **Bulgarian UNICEF study** - At least one parent of every fifth child in Bulgaria is abroad; The transnational families whose members live in different countries are 26% from all Bulgarian families as in 3% of cases both parents are abroad; Most of the children with both parents abroad are raised by their grandmother - 65,5%; 13,7% live with relatives, and 5,1% live in foster families.
- * **Romanian UNICEF study** - The phenomenon “alone at home” involves about 7 % of the total population aged 0-18 years, having at least one parent abroad. Approximately 126,000 of these children have two parents abroad and more than a half of all children live in rural areas.
- * The phenomenon of transnational families causes negative consequences for about **20% of the children in Bulgaria and 15% of the children in Romania.**

Conclusions based on two UNICEF studies about the risks for the children from migrant-families (transnational families)

Children from transnational families (TNF) have infringed rights and **are children at risk**. Four out of the 5 characteristics of the concept “children at risk” can be identified for these children. They are the following:

- * The children from TNF are left without the care of their parents.
- * For the children from TNF exists the danger of harming their physical, mental, moral, intellectual and social development.
- * For the children from TNF there exists a serious risk of dropping out from school.
- * For the children from TNF there is a risk of being abused and exploited.

Conclusions based on a co-authors' empirical study about the socialization deficits for the children from migrant-families (transnational families)

- * In the prevailing number of cases the children from THF left in Bulgaria while their parents work abroad, have health problems. The main reason for them is the **deficit of everyday competent care and attention** to the child's state,
- * The emotional state of the children from TNF is unstable, characterized with anxiety, withdrawal and sometimes with depressions, which require the intervention of a specialist. The main reason for the emotional problems of such children is the **deficit of emotional attachment**
- * Most of the children with migrant parents have problems with their success and behavior at school. The main reason for this is the **deficit of support and control** not only by the parents abroad but also by caregivers in the country of origin.
- * Most of the children from TNF manifest deviant behavior which indicate the **deficit of authority and role model to be followed up.**

Conclusions based on a co-authors' empirical study about the socialization deficits for the children from migrant-families (transnational families)

The children from TNF experience deficit of values.

- * Firstly, when the child is growing up without one or both parents, he/she suffers from the insufficient socializing impact of the family values.
- * For some of the children with migrant parents the education is not a value. The illustration for this is their bad success at school and their unwillingness to attend the lessons but all this causes problems in children's cognitive development.
- * There are also problems with children's identity and their affiliation to their own ethnocultural group and nation. It is difficult for the children from TNF to form national cultural values, pride and a strong sense of belonging to the native culture.

General conclusions

The intra-EU mobility and the THF as one of the main types of its existence cause very serious social problems for the countries which are the largest sources of migration to the West within the EU – Romania, Bulgaria and other Eastern member states. These problems are for the society, for the family as a social institute and for the children from such families. Some of them can be summarized, as follows:

- * First of all, the society suffers from the migration processes by reducing the natural growth, population aging, brain drain and so on.
- * The negative effects for the members of the intra-EU migrant families and the TNF are: changes in the social hierarchy of the couple, disintegration of the family, insufficient capacity of the grandparents in taking responsibilities for the children left behind.
- * The most serious negative effects are for the children from the families indicated above. They experience deficits in their socialization and risks for their further development: deficits of communication, support, care, control; deficits in their cognitive, emotional and psychological development, lack of relevant model of behavior. All these deficits affect the socialization process and cause risks for the overall development of such children and their adaptation to the contemporary societies.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION