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# A SCOPING REVIEW ON DISCRIMINATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND COPING OF TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES IN EUROPE

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This review explores the challenges encountered by transnational families in Europe amidst crises like forced migration, the refugee crisis, political unrest, war, and the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasising issues of discrimination, social protection, and coping strategies. The study analyses literature from 2011 to 2023, focusing on 52 peer-reviewed articles in English from SCOPUS and Web of Science databases. While social protection measures exist, they are often insufficient or inaccessible, leading families to rely on informal support networks and coping methods like community assistance and legal aid. The review underscores the necessity for more inclusive policies that address the specific hurdles, advocating for reforms to curb discrimination, fortify social protection, and bolster support frameworks.

Keywords: coping strategies, discrimination, migration and crises, social protection, transnational families



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## INTRODUCTION

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Transnational families (TNFs), defined as family units maintaining strong bonds across different countries (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002), are increasingly significant in Europe. They arise from global labour markets, political conflicts, and migration trends, leading to complex dynamics that challenge traditional family structures. Sharma (2013) defined the traditional family as two or more people united by marriage, blood, adoption, or consensual union, typically sharing a household. During crises such as COVID-19, war, political instability, and forced migration, issues like discrimination, social protection, and coping mechanisms become crucial (Stewart et al., 2008). Legal and geographic separation heightens TNFs' vulnerabilities, limiting access to support systems. These crises intersect with existing structural inequalities, further intensifying challenges critical to their well-being and resilience. Europe provides a diverse context for studying TNFs due to its varied migration histories, welfare regimes, and legal frameworks (Budginaitė-Mačkinė et al., 2026). For example, Northern Europe offers strong welfare systems but with restricted access for non-EU migrants (Friberg, 2012). Southern and Eastern Europe, with weaker systems, often leave TNFs with minimal formal support (Palash & Baby-Collin, 2019). Thus, this scoping review focuses on these key issues within the European context, where diverse social, cultural, and economic landscapes further complicate the experiences of TNFs and is grounded in transnationalism, intersectionality, and social capital theory. While transnationalism highlights cross-border ties (Glick Schiller et al., 1992), intersectionality explains overlapping forms of discrimination (Crenshaw, 2015), and social capital theory explores how families mobilise networks to cope (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). These theoretical frameworks serve as analytical tools for understanding how TNFs experience and respond to crises within diverse European contexts.

This review centres on three concepts: discrimination, social protection, and coping strategies. Discrimination appears in racial, ethnic, gender, and socio-economic forms (Makkonen, 2002). For instance, racial and ethnic bias in Sweden and Germany impedes social integration and access to services for TNFs (Åkesson, 2011; Amelina & Bause, 2020). Migrant mothers face dual discrimination (Ambrosini, 2015). In Switzerland, socio-economic discrimination confines TNFs to low-paying jobs (Ammann Dula, 2023). Additionally, social protection mechanisms encompass both formal services and informal networks. Access gaps persist across Europe (Serra Mingot & Mazzucato, 2018). While Sweden has adapted services for TNFs, cultural factors and informal care dynamics present ongoing challenges (Johnsdotter, 2015; Wyss & Nedelcu, 2020).

Coping strategies demonstrate TNFs' resilience – ranging from social support to preserving cultural and religious ties (Friebert, 2012). Technology facilitates the maintenance of these bonds (Yeates & Owusu-Sekyere, 2019), although its effectiveness varies depending on the context (Lagomarsino & Castellani, 2016).

Although there is substantial research on transnational families (TNFs) in Europe, most studies<sup>1</sup> address these issues separately. Comprehensive reviews synthesising these interconnected concepts, especially in the context of European crises, are lacking. Existing studies tend to focus on specific aspects, such as the impact of migration on family dynamics or social protection in migrant integration, without fully capturing the interplay between discrimination, social protection, and coping mechanisms within TNFs.

This scoping review investigates transnational families' experiences during crisis, focusing on discrimination, social protection access, and coping strategies, examining cross-country differences and effective coping practices. The primary research questions guiding this review are:

- RQ1: What are the experiences of TNFs in Europe during crises in terms of discrimination, social protection mechanisms, and coping strategies?
- RQ2: How do social protection mechanisms differ across European countries in supporting TNFs during crises?
- RQ3: What are the most effective coping strategies employed by TNFs in different European contexts?

This review synthesises studies to identify key themes, gaps, and areas for future research, thereby enhancing the understanding of TNFs' unique challenges and informing the development of effective policies and support systems. Ultimately, this synthesis will guide the creation of more effective policies and support systems to better serve these families, thereby enhancing their well-being and resilience in an interconnected world.

## **METHODS**

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### **Protocol and registration**

This scoping review was conducted to explore existing research related to discrimination, social protection, and coping mechanisms of TNFs in Europe. Unlike systematic reviews, it does not evaluate the quality of included studies; instead, it focuses on mapping the existing literature on a particular topic to identify gaps and provide guidance for future research and policymaking (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The reviewers

followed the methodology outlined in the Preferred Reporting Items of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) and its extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR), as described by Tricco et al. (2018). The use of the PRISMA-ScR guidelines ensures transparency and methodological rigour throughout the review process. Additionally, the review protocol was registered on OSF REGISTRIES (<https://osf.io/pd8a7/>) to promote transparency and allow for future updates or related research.

## Eligibility criteria

This scoping review aimed to understand the experiences of TNFs in Europe, specifically discrimination, social protection mechanisms, and coping strategies. Only peer-reviewed journal articles were included, ensuring academic rigour and reliability. Grey literature, such as dissertations, news bulletins, and reports, was excluded to maintain high-quality evidence.

This review examines the unique challenges faced by TNFs in Europe from 2011 to 2023, focusing on the turbulent periods such as the 2016 migrant crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. The review covers a wide range of relevant literature, including both qualitative, quantitative and mixed studies. The focus is on studies specifically addressing TNFs in Europe, focusing on topics like social protection, discrimination, and coping strategies for emigrant and immigrant groups. The review prioritises studies on the impact of these issues on educational outcomes, employment, language challenges, and health outcomes for TNFs. Both original research articles and review articles are included to build a robust evidence base.

## Information sources and search process

A comprehensive search strategy was developed to capture relevant literature across several interconnected themes. Keywords were carefully selected and combined using Boolean operators (OR and AND) to create a robust search equation. Key search phrases included combinations such as "anti-discriminat\*" OR "discriminat\*" AND "transnational fam\*" AND "Europe\*," "social protection" AND "transnational fam\*" AND "Europe\*," and "coping mechanism\*" AND "transnational fam\*" AND "Europe\*." This strategy was designed to retrieve studies that specifically address discrimination, social protection, and coping mechanisms among TNFs in Europe.

The literature search was conducted using SCOPUS and Web of Science databases, which have extensive coverage of peer-reviewed social sciences literature. The search focused on titles, abstracts, and keywords to retrieve relevant studies and ensure a comprehensive review set.

## **Study selection**

Studies identified through the search process were imported into Zotero, a reference management tool. Six reviewers independently screened the titles and abstracts of the identified studies to determine their eligibility. Disagreements among reviewers were resolved through discussion until a consensus was reached, ensuring that only studies meeting the pre-defined eligibility criteria were selected for full-text analysis.

## **Data charting process**

The data charting process involved six independent reviewers extracting relevant information from studies using a pre-structured data extraction sheet in Microsoft Excel. Key data categories included article information, study characteristics, and focus. The data extraction was conducted by one reviewer and verified by the other reviewers. The reviewers documented key findings, such as discrimination types, impact on transnational families, and effectiveness of social protection mechanisms. They also documented coping mechanisms employed by transnational families.

The reviewers identified gaps and limitations in the studies, such as underexplored areas or methodological constraints. Finally, the implications of each study were recorded, including policy implications, suggestions for future research, and recommendations for improving social protection measures. This structured approach to data charting ensured that the review captured a comprehensive and detailed picture of the current state of research on TNFs in Europe during crises.

## **Synthesis of results**

The included studies were synthesised qualitatively and presented in the "Results" section. The synthesis was conducted using both narrative and tabular formats. Key concepts such as discrimination, social protection mechanisms, and coping strategies employed by TNFs were tabulated for clarity, while the overall narrative provided a cohesive summary of the findings. The significance of these findings was highlighted, particularly concerning the study's research questions and objectives.

## **Methodological rigour and limitations**

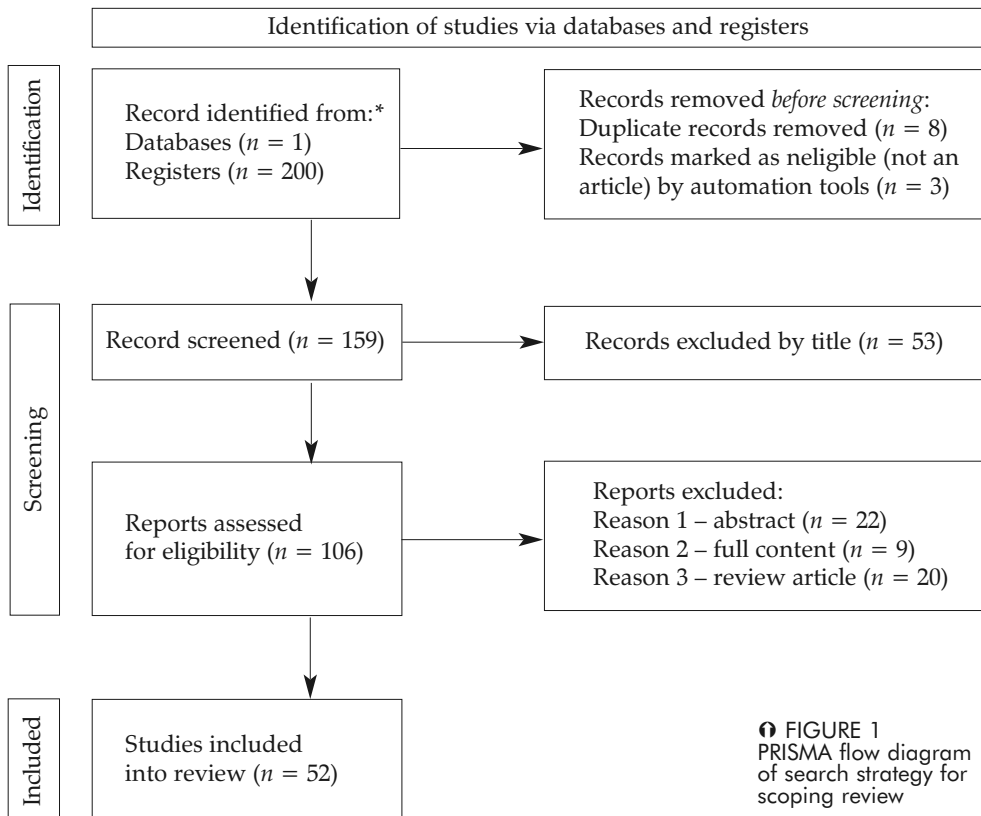
This scoping review has limitations, including potential selection bias due to the inclusion of peer-reviewed journal articles, variability in methodologies and contexts, and potential publication bias. This could lead to underrepresentation of perspectives from non-Western or less-researched regions. The diversity of studies adds richness but limits generalisability.

Future research should explore underrepresented areas and incorporate a broader range of sources to provide a more comprehensive understanding of transnational family challenges in Europe. Another limitation of the study is language. Only articles written in the English language were included in the analysis; research published in other languages were excluded.

## FINDINGS

### Selection of evidence sources

The initial search of the literature identified 200 studies through the database search. After removing duplicates ( $n = 8$ ) and ineligible ( $n = 3$ ), 189 studies were screened based on their title and abstract. From this initial screening, 53 studies were excluded by title as they did not meet the eligibility criteria.



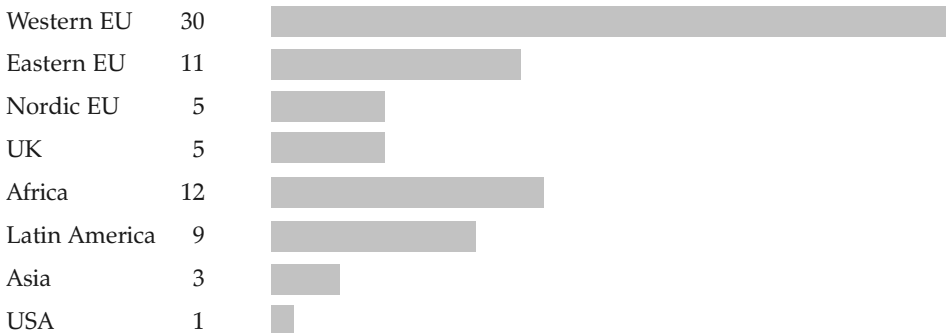
The remaining 106 studies were assessed for eligibility according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Twenty-two articles were deemed less relevant to the study's objectives as they primarily focused on theoretical discussions (e.g., Bailey,

2013; Matias, 2020), legal norms (e.g., Leinonen & Pellander, 2014), or comparative diaspora studies (e.g., Yoon, 2012), rather than the specific experiences of transnational families during crises. These studies did not sufficiently address the key themes of discrimination, social protection mechanisms, or coping strategies. Additionally, some studies lacked clarity in their objectives and methods (e.g., Ivanova, 2022), making it difficult to assess their relevance. The final number of articles that were included in this scoping review was 52, and data was extracted from each of these articles. Figure 1 presents the PRISMA flow diagram,<sup>2</sup> which illustrates the number of studies included in each stage of the screening process and the rationale for their inclusion or exclusion.

## Characteristics of evidence sources

The 52 studies included in this scoping review explore the experiences of transnational families during crises, with a focus on discrimination, social protection mechanisms, and coping strategies. The studies span various geographic contexts, including Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia, and were published between 2011 and 2023 (see Figure 2), which indicates the distribution of the studies across all years, with an increase during the pandemic (2019–2023) (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 2  
Geographical context  
of included studies

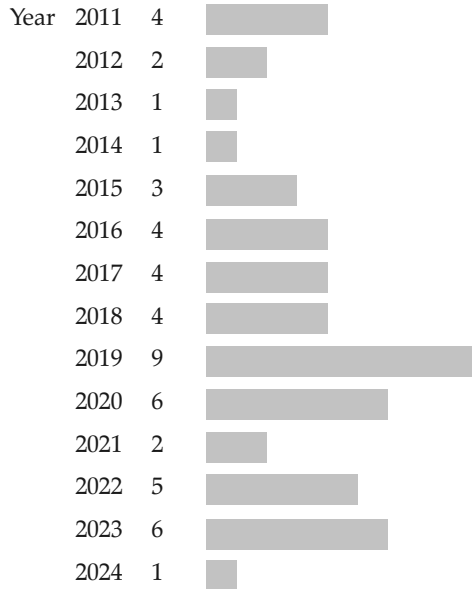


The researchers involved come from diverse disciplines,<sup>3</sup> providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by transnational families (Ambrosini, 2015; Amelina & Bause, 2020; Barglowski et al., 2015; Belloni, 2016; Barros et al., 2025; González-Ferrer et al., 2014, Madziva & Zontini, 2012).

A total of 43 studies employed qualitative research methodologies, such as in-depth interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, and case studies, to capture the lived experiences of migrants and their families (Martin-Bylund & Stenliden, 2022; Leonen & Rosen, 2023; Barglowski et al., 2015; Barros et al., 2025; Belloni, 2016), (see Figure 4). For example, Ambrosini (2015)

conducted in-depth interviews with first-generation migrant mothers and their reunited children in Italy to explore transnational family relations and care practices. Similarly, Amelina and Bause (2020) used biographical interviews and ethnographic observations to analyse care and social protection among forced-migrant families in Germany and Belloni (2016) engaged with Eritrean refugees using ethnographic methods. Bargłowski et al. (2015) focused on transnational caregiving practices among Polish migrants in Germany and their relatives in Poland through qualitative methods.

FIGURE 3  
Publication years  
of included studies



Sample sizes in the included studies varied significantly (Min = 7, Max = 15384, Mean = 542, SD = 25). Fifteen studies focused on small, detailed samples of 20-30 participants (Barros et al., 2025; Belloni, 2016), while eight studies employed larger sample sizes for broader surveys (González-Ferrer et al., 2014). For instance, Barros et al. (2025) conducted interviews with 22 young Portuguese adult migrants and Ammann Dula (2023) used 7 interviews in a biographical approach. In contrast, González-Ferrer et al. (2014) analysed data from 603 migrants across three African countries to understand migration motives and return dynamics.

The 52 studies (see Table 1) covered a wide range of transnational family dynamics, including caregiving arrangements, the impact of migration on family ties, and the role of digital communication in maintaining cross-border relationships (Mazzucato et al., 2015). Thirty-six studies focused on the challenges faced by these families in accessing social protection and

navigating discrimination in both their host and origin countries (Serra Mingot, 2022; Oso & Martínez-Buján, 2022; Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2013). The diversity in study designs and methodologies, in a variety of geographical contexts, sending and receiving countries for transnational families and migrants, where the research was conducted, enriches the overall findings of this scoping review, offering a multifaceted perspective on the resilience and coping mechanisms of transnational families during times of crisis.

➡ FIGURE 4  
Research methodology  
and data collection  
tools of included  
studies

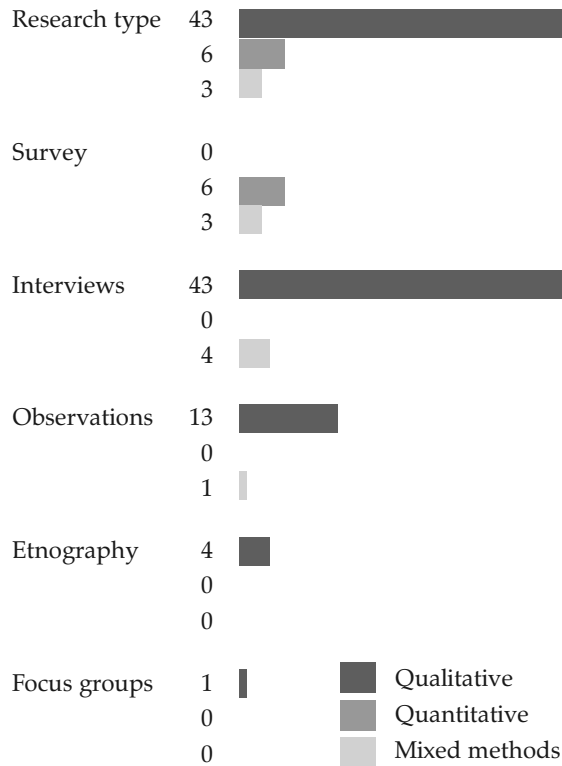


Figure 5 illustrates the main research focus and themes in the studies under investigation. As it is shown, the most prominent themes are care and social protection of transnational families (TNFs), transnational marriages and parenting, gender roles and sexuality, and migration policy. This figure underscores the significance of caregiving and parenting issues, often influenced by gendered expectations, and illustrates the intersection of themes, particularly when migration policy frameworks affect experiences of familial separation and intimacy. This visualisation supports that the social protection of transnational families must be comprehended in relation to the intersecting dynamics of discrimination, mobility regimes, and familial adaptability.

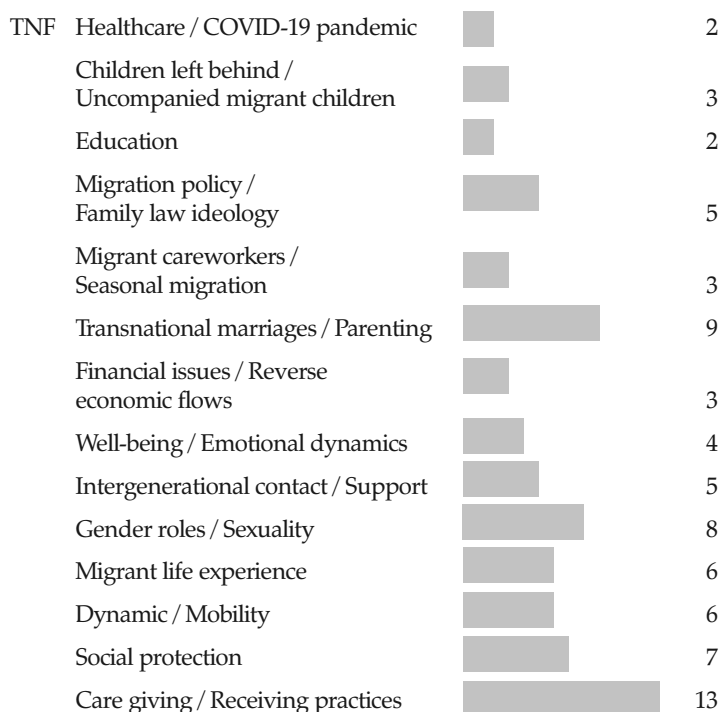


FIGURE 5  
Research focus and themes of the included studies

## Discrimination

The studies reviewed reveal various forms of discrimination (see Table 1) that impact transnational families, affecting their social integration, economic opportunities, and emotional well-being. Discrimination based on race, gender, class, and ethnicity was a recurring theme across several studies. For instance, Åkesson (2011) highlights how racial discrimination experienced by young Swedish-Cape Verdeans fuels their desire to establish transnational belonging as a response to exclusion from Swedish society. Similarly, Ambrosini (2015) notes the stigmatisation and economic challenges faced by migrant mothers in Italy, compounded by the global care chains and transnational political economy of care.

TABLE 1  
Concepts related to discrimination

Article(s)	Concepts
Åkesson, 2011	Racial discrimination, Social exclusion
Ambrosini, 2015	Gender discrimination, Economic challenges
Amelina and Bause, 2020; Bargłowski et al., 2015	Intersectional discrimination (gender, race, socio-economic)
Brzezińska, 2021	Gender discrimination in transnational marriages
Lafleur and Romero, 2018	Racial and class discrimination in healthcare access
Leon and Rosen, 2023	Stigmatisation, Adulthood of migrant children
Yeates and Owusu-Sekyere, 2019	Exclusion, Exploitation, Financial and emotional burdens

Other studies, such as those by Amelina and Bause (2020) and Bargłowski et al. (2015), emphasise the intersectional nature of discrimination, where gender, race, and socio-economic factors converge to limit access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for transnational families. Discrimination is often contextualised within broader social and institutional structures, as seen in the study by Brzezińska (2021), which explores gender discrimination within transnational marriages. Additionally, Lafleur and Romero (2018) underscore how restricted access to formal healthcare due to racial and class discrimination forces transnational families to rely on remittances and community solidarity for their healthcare needs.

The impact of such discrimination is profound, influencing not only the socio-economic mobility of transnational families but also their emotional and psychological well-being. For example, Leon and Rosen (2023) discuss the stigmatisation and adultification of unaccompanied migrant children, complicating their relationships with social care systems. Similarly, Yeates and Owusu-Sekyere (2019) highlight the financial and emotional burdens placed on remittance senders due to exclusion and exploitation, adversely affecting their quality of life and ability to provide for their families. These findings underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of discrimination faced by transnational families across various contexts.

## **Social protection mechanisms**

The studies included in this scoping review reveal that transnational migration scholars have started to bring the literature on care into the conversation with the diverse transnational social protection mechanisms (see Table 2) utilised by transnational families, reflecting the challenges and opportunities associated with their unique circumstances. Social protection mechanisms range from formal welfare programmes to informal support systems within families and communities. Serra-Mingot & Mazzucato, (2019) have shown that often the provision of intra-familial care is perceived as more appropriate for specific needs as compared to other formal state-based provisions. In her study, Ambrosini (2015) emphasises the role of welfare programmes, legal assistance, and community services in supporting migrant mothers during family separation and reunification processes. However, these mechanisms often fall short in addressing the complex needs of transnational families, particularly regarding economic stability and emotional well-being.

TABLE 2  
Concepts related to  
social protection  
mechanisms

In the context of forced migration, Amelina and Bause (2020) explore the limitations of social protection mechanisms in Germany, highlighting how legal status stratification impacts access to formal social protection for forced migrants. The study also underscores the importance of semiformal resources provided by NGOs and migrant organisations in filling the gaps left by formal social protection systems. Similarly, Drotbohm (2011) discusses the challenges deportees face in Cape Verde, where social protection mechanisms are strained by the ambivalence of juridical citizenship and the powerful ascriptions of belonging, leading to continuous othering and social exclusion.

Article(s)	Concepts
Ambrosini, 2015	Welfare programs, Legal assistance, Community services
Amelina and Bause, 2020	Limitations of social protection for forced migrants, Legal status stratification
Drotbohm, 2011	Challenges in social protection for deportees, Social exclusion
Dankyi et al., 2017	Kin-based support systems, Remittances, Faith-based networks
Saksela-Bergholm, 2019	Informal social protection, Migrant capital (remittances, social ties)
Serra Mingot, 2020	Transnational care-receiving in social protection arrangements
Wyss and Nedelcu, 2020	Discriminatory migration regimes, Access to social protection benefits, Zero-generation childcare arrangements

Several studies focus on the role of informal social protection mechanisms, particularly within transnational families. Dankyi et al. (2017) highlight the reliance on kin-based support systems, remittances, and faith-based networks in Ghana, which are crucial for caregivers of migrant children. These informal mechanisms are often the primary source of social protection due to the inadequacies of formal programmes. Similarly, Saksela-Bergholm (2019) discusses the use of migrant capital, including remittances and social ties, as a strategy for social protection among Filipino transnational families, emphasising the role of reciprocity and commitment between migrants and non-migrants in ensuring effective support.

Despite the existence of these mechanisms, gaps in social protection are prevalent. Leon and Rosen (2023) show that often institutions that are intended to provide care and protection may fail, as well as unaccompanied children rarely disclose relations with frontline practitioners. Similarly, Wyss and Nedelcu (2020) highlight the discriminatory nature of the Swiss migration regime, which hinders non-EU nationals from accessing social protection benefits, particularly in the context of zero-generation childcare arrangements. These findings underscore the need for more comprehensive and inclusive social protection systems to better support the diverse needs of transnational families.

## Coping strategies used by transnational families

Transnational families employ various coping strategies (see Table 3) to navigate the complex challenges associated with migration, separation, and maintaining family ties across borders. These strategies often involve a combination of reliance on community networks, adapting cultural practices, and seeking legal recourse to manage the difficulties they face.

Article(s)	Concepts
Åkesson, 2011	Reliance on community networks, Maintaining transnational family ties
Ambrosini, 2015	Long-distance communication, Financial support, Resilience in family relationships
Lagomarsino & Castellani, 2016	Balancing traditional gender roles with educational aspirations, Social acceptance strategies
Friberg, 2012	Maintaining strong social ties, Adapting cultural practices
Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2013	Global care chains, Care regimes, Care culture and policies
Sportel, 2020	Legal aid, NGO activism, Transnational cooperation
Leon & Rosen, 2023	Managing indebted relationships, Reliance on community networks, Legal assistance
Saksela-Bergholm, 2019	Extended family networks, Community support, Circular migration, Leveraging remittances

**TABLE 3**  
Concepts related to coping strategies used by transnational families

Many studies emphasise the importance of community networks as a key coping mechanism. For instance, young Swedish-Cape Verdeans turn to their Cape Verdean family and friends for support when faced with exclusion in Swedish society, maintaining strong transnational family ties to cope with their experiences of discrimination (Åkesson, 2011). Similarly, migrant mothers in Ambrosini's (2015) study rely on long-distance communication and financial support to maintain relationships with their children, demonstrating resilience in the face of separation.

Adapting cultural practices is another common strategy. For example, Ecuadorian daughters in Genoa and Seville adopt coping mechanisms that involve balancing traditional gender roles with their educational aspirations, using their roles within the family to navigate social acceptance and promotion (Lagomarsino & Castellani, 2016). Similarly, transnational families of Polish migrants in Norway maintain strong social ties and cultural practices to address the complexities of living and working across borders (Friberg, 2012). These strategies help them preserve their cultural identity while adapting to the host society's demands, thereby mitigating some of the stresses associated with transnational living.

Legal recourse also plays a significant role as a coping strategy for transnational families, particularly in situations where formal support systems are insufficient or inaccessible. For instance, Sportel (2020) highlights how left-behind women in Dutch-Moroccan families utilise legal aid, NGO activism, and transnational cooperation to address the challenges they face, demonstrating the effectiveness of these strategies in improving their situation. Similarly, unaccompanied migrant children navigate complex indebted relationships by relying on community networks and seeking legal assistance to manage the challenges posed by their circumstances (Leon & Rosen, 2023).

Overall, the effectiveness of these coping strategies varies depending on the context and the resources available to transnational families. While community networks and cultural adaptations often provide essential support, the need for formal legal recourse and the limitations of informal mechanisms underscore the challenges these families continue to face in their transnational lives.

## **DISCUSSION**

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This scoping review explored the challenges transnational families in Europe face during crises. These families frequently encounter structural and interpersonal discrimination – based on race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status – which limits access to services and opportunities. Discrimination is embedded in social, economic, and political structures. Studies such as Åkesson (2011) and Ambrosini (2015) show how racial and gender biases shape access to social services, employment, and overall integration. This aligns with intersectionality theory, which explains how compounded identities intensify marginalisation (Crenshaw, 2015).

Discrimination experiences differ across Europe. For instance, Eastern European Roma migrants in Helsinki face ethnic discrimination linked to local policies (Tervonen & Enache, 2017), while in Western and Southern Europe, systemic racial and economic biases are more prevalent, particularly among migrants from Latin America and Africa (Lagomarsino & Castellani, 2016; González-Ferrer et al., 2014). In the UK, restrictive migration policies further marginalise non-EU families by limiting access to social services and hindering family reunification (Nehring & Sealey, 2020).

The review also highlights gaps in social protection. Though welfare programmes and legal aid exist, many families face barriers to access due to legal status or socio-economic constraints. Informal networks like NGOs and community ties are essential but reflect systemic failures in formal support. In Northern Europe, welfare systems are more robust but less

accessible to non-EU migrants (Friberg, 2012; Åkesson, 2011). Southern countries, with weaker welfare structures, rely heavily on informal networks (Palash & Baby-Collin, 2019). These disparities underline the need for more inclusive and equitable policies.

Coping strategies vary across contexts and reflect both resilience and structural limitations. These include maintaining cultural ties, using legal aid, and relying on digital tools or community support. In affluent countries like Sweden and the Netherlands, strong digital infrastructure supports transnational communication (Mazzucato et al., 2017). In contrast, Southern Europe sees more reliance on kinship and circular migration (Saksela-Bergholm, 2019).

These findings underscore the importance of the theoretical frameworks underpinning this review. Transnationalism explains how families sustain ties across borders. Intersectionality reveals how overlapping identities shape vulnerability. Social capital theory highlights the role of networks and informal mechanisms. Together, these frameworks illuminate how transnational families adapt within exclusionary policy landscapes in Europe.

These findings necessitate the implementation of urgent policy reforms that address the structural inequalities faced by transnational families in Europe. It is incumbent upon governments to prioritise the implementation of inclusive migration and integration policies that effectively remove legal and administrative barriers to social protection. The enhancement of access to social services for non-EU migrants, irrespective of their legal status, has been demonstrated to engender a reduction in inequalities in welfare levels. It is submitted that practical measures could include the expansion of eligibility criteria for housing, healthcare and legal aid, particularly in countries with restrictive frameworks. Furthermore, policy makers should allocate resources to culturally sensitive social services that acknowledge the multifaceted needs of transnational families. The enhancement of collaboration between state institutions and NGOs has the potential to facilitate improved access and enhanced service delivery. Digital tools and platforms should be utilised to facilitate transnational care and communication. A rights-based and intersectional approach to social protection has been demonstrated to engender long-term inclusivity and resilience.

## **Strengths and limitations**

This scoping review provides a broad view of the challenges faced by transnational families, focusing on discrimination, social protection, and coping strategies. While diverse study designs strengthen insights, reliance on English-language publi-

cations and varied methodologies limits cohesion. The review identifies systemic gaps and emphasises more inclusive future research, though lacks a quality assessment of included studies.

## **CONCLUSION**

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This review highlights the complex challenges faced by transnational families in Europe, including discrimination, limited social protection, and reliance on coping strategies. Despite available mechanisms, many families face restricted access, especially those with uncertain legal status. Informal support networks are vital, but also highlight failures in formal systems.

The resilience of transnational families is evident in their use of cultural practices, legal tools, and social networks. However, effectiveness varies widely depending on geographic and socio-economic context. There is an urgent need for inclusive, equitable policies that address these systemic gaps. Future research should focus on underrepresented groups (e.g., undocumented migrants), long-term impacts of discrimination, and the policy environments shaping these experiences. Mixed-methods approaches and intersectional frameworks can offer deeper insight into adaptive strategies and support needs.

### **Recommendations for research and practice**

The review suggests prioritising research, policies, and practical actions to better support transnational families. Recommendations include focusing on underrepresented regions, conducting comparative and longitudinal studies, exploring cultural differences and technology's impact, and using mixed methods approaches for a comprehensive understanding.

To support transnational families, inclusive social protection policies must be developed, including expanding access to social assistance and legal aid. Anti-discrimination measures, community-based interventions, and mental health support are also crucial, along with technology for family connections and cultural competency training for service providers.

### **Research gaps and future directions**

Future research on transnational families should address research gaps, use intersectionality and resilience theory, and employ mixed methods to understand discrimination and adaptation strategies. Additionally, studies on the impact of policies and identification of best practices are needed.

Moreover, future research should explore the experiences of understudied populations, such as undocumented migrants and second-generation transnational families, to provide a more

comprehensive understanding of the diverse challenges and coping strategies within these groups. By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to more effective policies and interventions that better support transnational families, reducing their vulnerabilities and enhancing their ability to thrive despite the systemic challenges they face.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Please see Budginaitė-Mačkinė et al., 2026; Bryceson, 2019; Hoffmann, Jónsson and Meckl, 2022; Jerves et al., 2020; Krzyzowski and Mucha, 2014; Juozeliūnienė and Budginaitė, 2018; Kirsch and Gogonas, 2018; Oliveira, 2020; Sampaio and Carvalho, 2022; Vivas-Romero, 2020; and Vuckovic Juros, 2022.
- <sup>2</sup> PRISMA: Preferred Reporting Items of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis.
- <sup>3</sup> These disciplines are law, linguistics, education, sociology, political sciences, anthropology-sociology and applied linguistics.

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## Pretražni pregled diskriminacije, socijalne zaštite i mehanizama suočavanja transnacionalnih obitelji u Europi

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Ovaj pregled istražuje izazove s kojima se suočavaju transnacionalne obitelji u Europi tijekom kriza poput prisilnih migracija, izbjegličke krize, političkih nemira, rata i pandemije COVID-19, s naglaskom na diskriminaciju, mehanizme socijalne zaštite i strategije suočavanja. Pregled sustavno mapira postojeću literaturu od 2011. do 2023.

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godine, analizirajući 52 recenzirane studije na engleskom jeziku iz baza podataka SCOPUS i Web of Science. Mehanizmi socijalne zaštite, iako postoje, često su neadekvatni ili nedostupni, što prisiljava obitelji da se oslanjaju na neformalne mreže podrške i strategije suočavanja, kao što su podrška zajednice i pravna pomoć. Pregled naglašava potrebu za uključivijim politikama koje se bave jedinstvenim izazovima transnacionalnih obitelji, zalažući se za reforme suzbijanja diskriminacije te jačanja socijalne zaštite i okvira podrške.

Ključne riječi: strategije suočavanja, diskriminacija, migracije i krize, socijalna zaštita, transnacionalne obitelji



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