



New Diaspora?

Joint action and transnational networks of Afghan and Syrian communities in Germany

Summary

In the last decade, forced migration has led to a sharp rise in the number of people from Afghanistan and Syria living in Germany. This most recent migration episode was preceded by earlier ones, and smaller Afghan and Syrian communities have been residing in Germany for several decades. Due to family reunification and a new generation born in Germany, these communities are growing. In view of the ongoing conflict and security situation in their countries of origin, the majority is set to remain in Germany permanently. At the same time, many people maintain family, social, and economic ties to their countries of origin. In some cases, personal ties have given rise to various forms of joint action. In recent years, for example, Afghan and Syrian diaspora organisations that focus on humanitarian or political work on behalf of their respective countries of origin, or advocate for the interests of their communities in Germany, have been established.

There is little research in these joint as well as individual transnational activities that people of Afghan and Syrian origin in Germany engage in. However, such activities are of considerable importance – not only for the lives of the individuals and their social participation in Germany, but also for Germany's future policies regarding economic relations and development cooperation with Afghanistan and Syria.

Starting with a conceptual introduction and a short description of historical and current migration trends, the Policy Brief looks specifically at joint actions of these two populations. Initial research identified 128 Afghan and 84 Syrian diaspora organisations and categorised them according to their field of action. The research shows that supporting their fellow nationals with their integration in Germany and providing humanitarian support and development assistance for the respective country of origin are prominent areas of activity for both communities.

The initial stocktaking leads to four further conclusions: First, both groups are highly heterogeneous. Their members differ according to age, gender, political, social and other affiliations,

or in relation to their residence status in Germany. Second, both communities show lines of internal conflict similar to those in their country of origin. Third, their joint activities develop dynamically through the formation of new organisations, new areas of action, digitisation, or a growing political awareness regarding the importance of the diaspora. Fourth, the diaspora is becoming more and more Europeanised, with groups based in Germany networking with diaspora initiatives in other European countries. The Policy Brief concludes by outlining further areas of research, particularly those that take into account the perspectives of the members of the two communities and the way they see themselves.