

## BRIEF THESIS REPORT

# The Effects of the Rise of the Far Right in Europe on Diaspora-led Development Activities: The Case of Germany and the Netherlands

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### AT A GLANCE



**Far-right politics affects diaspora organizations (DOs) through both policy changes (in the Netherlands) and public attitudes (in both countries).**



**DOs' adaptive capacities determine the magnitude of the impacts and shape how each DOs respond.**



**Strengthening strategic leadership, network solidarity, and diversified funding can mitigate some effects of a hostile political climate and foster DOs' resilience.**

### BACKGROUND

- The rise of the far right across Europe, reflected in electoral gain and increasingly normalized anti-migration and development skeptic rhetoric, raises concerns over a shift in migration- and development-related attitudes and practices.
- These trends can lead to more restrictive migration policies, reduced development budgets and heightened public hostility toward people with migration backgrounds.
- This resurging influence therefore presents a significant challenge to diaspora organizations (DOs) and diaspora-led development agenda.
- Driven by shared identities, transnational ties and connection to their heritages, DOs have long been a key player in mobilizing resources for development in both countries of origin (COOs) and residence (CORs).
- While their transnational traits and agencies are pivotal, supportive policy and social environments in the countries of residence enhance their ability to operate. When these conditions deteriorate, DOs' capacities may be undermined.

### RESEARCH APPROACH

#### Focuses

How the growing influence of far-right politics in Europe has affected DO-led development activities, and how DOs have navigated these challenges.

#### Objective

- To contribute to the current debates on far-right influence in migration and development
- To offer practical insights for DOs and relevant stakeholders to navigate these challenging landscapes.

#### Methodologies

- A qualitative cross-country comparison on the case of Germany and the Netherlands between 2010 and early 2025.
- Findings were drawn on policy document analysis and 13 semi-structured interviews with DO representatives and experts on migration and/or development (conducted between April to July 2025).

## KEY FINDINGS



### GERMANY

- The results indicate **limited direct far-right influence** on German migration and development policies. Although migration policies became more restrictive after 2015, no clear link to far-right pressure was identified.
- Development policies remained generally supportive** of diaspora engagement, yet several barriers, mainly administrative challenges, economic conditions, and conflicts in COOs, continue to limit DOs' access to support.
- In contrast, **anti-migration attitudes and behaviors were gradually normalized** among some parts of the populations after 2015. While these shifts did not translate into policy change during the study period, some respondents reported several effects of the increasingly hostile environment:



**Temporary difficulty in gaining broader public support**, particularly during election periods



**Internal tension and fragmentation** among diaspora groups concerned over losing government support

- By that, only few respondents mobilized resources specifically to counter far-right factions, whereas most of them had to prioritize navigating existing structural constraints.

Still, these specific responses could be outlined:



**Strengthening solidarity and promoting anti-discrimination** education and training



**Refraining from publicly opposing state agendas**, sometimes distancing themselves from networks to secure access to support

### THE NETHERLANDS

- In contrast, the Dutch case shows **a tangible shift in migration and development policies under far-right pressure** since 2010. Anti-migration and development skepticism not only became normalized but also embedded in policies.
- Diaspora engagement decreased** due to funding cuts and the instrumentalization of development for migration control.
- Combined with a hostile public climate, these shifts resulted in:



**Reduced structural support** from the government and major donors



**Organizational adjustment** adopted at the expense of staff well-being, long-term impact and sustainability



**Ongoing threat and violence** targeting diaspora-led anti-discrimination movements

- In responses, the Dutch-based DOs and relevant stakeholders adopted these measures:



**Adjusted project design and implementation**: downsizing activities; avoiding hostile stakeholders; engaging in more generally relevant topic; shifting core activities to COOs



**Adjusted Staffing and funding management**: relying on volunteer; diversifying funding sources (membership fees, community fundraising, international grants)



**Strengthening solidarity and advocating for policy changes** through network-building, political campaign and parliamentary engagement

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### A Broad Comparison

Overall, the Dutch-based DOs faced more direct and concrete constraints resulting from far-right policy shifts than their German counterparts. Both sides either experienced or observed increasing public hostility, although these shifts did not translate into systematic restrictions in Germany during the study period.

Yet, the magnitude of the impact individual DOs experienced and their responses are varied depending on:



### Concluding remark

Considering these dynamics and this research's limitations (addressed in the full report), the results do not draw a definitive comparison between the two country cases or a generalized picture of all DOs.

Instead, they reflect **the enabling factors that shape DOs' resilience in changing political climate**, which could further inform actions of DOs and relevant stakeholders.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### For DOs and fellow practitioners

- **Strengthen leadership and strategic competencies** to navigate political uncertainty
- **Build strategic network and cross-community partnerships** for support and collective action
- **Adopt innovative models** to sustain funding mechanism
- **Invest in community empowerment and political participation**, reinforcing the message that diasporas have the power to influence the environments where they operate

### For public institutions

- **Recognize DOs as key development actors** whose work contributes to both integration and foreign policy, particularly in the field of development
- **Develop systematic and accessible mechanisms** to engage and support diaspora-led initiatives, addressing structural barriers that prevent DOs' full contribution

### For researchers who are interested to fill the gaps

- **Incorporate existing DO typologies** and **integrate DOs' organizational attributes into analytical framework** to ensure thorough respondent profiling and DO representation
- **Engage with complementary theories and discourses** (e.g. organizational behavior, neo-liberal discourse in migration and development)