



Political participation of refugees: bridging the gaps

19 April 2018, 17:00 – 20:30

**Berlin Representative Office, Robert Bosch Stiftung,
Französische Straße 32, 10117 Berlin**

Background

With the global refugee population reaching an estimated 22.5 million by mid-2017, compared to 10.4 million in 2011, the world is seeing an unprecedented increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers. More than half of the global refugee population comes from only three countries: Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan. Although 84% of refugees worldwide are hosted by non-EU countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Kenya and Uganda, European countries are also experiencing exceptionally growing refugee flows. Germany has become one of Europe's major destinations of refugees, receiving a total of 722,370 new asylum applications in 2016. While ongoing policy debates are largely focusing on the humanitarian, social and economic implications of large-scale forced migration, issues related to refugees' civic and political inclusion and their potential to participate in political life and decision-making processes in their host countries and their countries of origin have not been adequately explored.

Refugees have the potential to make an impact on political life of both their host and origin countries, as they often maintain transnational links with their homelands while at the same time they become part of the host society. Recognizing the dual role of refugees as political actors, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) with the support of the Robert Bosch Foundation, gathered comparative knowledge on the various formal and non-formal mechanisms of political participation of refugees in their host and origin countries, and presents the report "Political participation of refugees: bridging the gaps".

The report is based on case studies carried out through interviews and focus group discussions with refugees and key informants in 8 host countries with high numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, including Germany, Sweden, the UK, Turkey, Lebanon, South Africa, Kenya and Uganda. It offers cross-country insights into the experiences of refugee communities originating from 5 of the largest source countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

PROGRAMME

Time	Sessions
17:00 - 17:30	Registration of participants <i>Light snacks and refreshments will be available</i>
17:30-17:40	Welcome and introductory remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Ana Bojadjievska – Senior Project Manager, Robert Bosch Stiftung
17:40-18:00	Presentation of the Report “Political participation of refugees: bridging the gaps” <u>Facilitator:</u> Mr. Christian Koch <u>Speakers:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Armend Bekaj – Senior Programme Officer, International IDEA Ms. Lina Antara – Programme Officer, International IDEA
18:00-19:30	Political participation of refugees in host and origin countries <i>Drawing on “The Case of Afghan and Syrian Refugees in Germany” and the findings of the Report, this session will address issues related to access to citizenship and electoral rights for refugees in Germany, as well as other mechanisms of political participation such as consultative bodies, civil society organizations and grassroots initiatives. It will also discuss the role of refugees in political life of their origin countries with a focus on out-of-country voting, diaspora networks and transnational political activism.</i> <u>Facilitator:</u> Mr. Christian Koch <u>Speakers:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Tanja Berg - Political Scientist, Minor Ms. Nora Ragab - Author of “The Case of Afghan and Syrian Refugees in Germany” and PhD fellow at the Migration and Development research cluster, Maastricht University Mr. Osama Salem - Founding member of the Network for Refugee Voices Mr. Shoaib Sharifi - Author of “The Case of Afghan Refugees in the UK” and BBC World Service Kabul Bureau Chief (<i>tbc</i>) Dr. Ruvi Ziegler - Associate Professor in International Refugee Law, University of Reading
19:30-20:30	Reception