The European Union diaspora dilemma: To dodge or to dive in

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Abstract: *The European Union member states have long been confronted with the phenomenon of diaspora resulting from both emigration and immigration. For centuries European communities have settled outside of the EU, almost creating 'little homelands' in various corners of the world. The same has occurred and still occurs with diasporas originating from third countries and residing in EU territory. A further feature makes the EU context unique when it comes to diasporas, namely, the opportunity for EU citizens to freely move across the borders of member states due to free mobility policies. The possibilities presented by free mobility have led to the formation of many diaspora communities in EU member states coming from other EU member states. However, over the past years much more attention has been devoted to large 'immigrating' diasporas, given the increased influx of migrants from third countries. This article analyses the approaches of member states and the EU as an organisation towards diasporas and diaspora engagement, including the question of whether any clear policy frameworks to mobilise diaspora actors exist. The first part provides a brief mapping of the 'EU diasporas', while the second part focuses on the various diaspora policy strategies adopted by member states when dealing with their own diasporas and those within their territories. By then studying the cases of France and Bulgaria, the article answers the first research question: What is the relationship between EU member states and diasporas within their policy frameworks? The last part examines the diaspora issue at the institutional level of the EU, answering the second research question: What is the relationship between the EU and diaspora within its policy framework? This question is of particular interest since the diaspora topic has garnered increased attention in the context of several EU high priority issues and because the EU regularly provides guidance for its member states through policy making.*

Key words: *European Union; diaspora; democracy; migration; policy*

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1   Introduction: The peculiarity of diasporas in the European Union

For centuries the member states of the European Union (EU) have been confronted with the phenomenon of diaspora resulting from both emigration and immigration. While for years European communities have settled outside of the EU, almost creating 'little homelands' in various corners of the world, the same has occurred and still occurs with diasporas originating from third countries and residing in EU territory. In addition to this twofold situation, a further feature makes the EU context quite unique as far as diasporas are concerned, namely, the opportunity for EU citizens to freely move across the member states due to free mobility policies. This, in turn, has led to the formation of many diaspora communities within EU countries coming from other EU member states. However, putting aside internal movements, over the past years much more attention has been dedicated to large 'immigrating' diasporas, given the increased influx of migrants from third countries (Eurostat 2018).

Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyse the approaches of both member states and the EU, as an organisation, towards diasporas and diaspora engagement, including the question whether any clear policy frameworks to mobilise diaspora actors exist. In order to do so, the article adopts a comparative approach, including two case studies, which examines different migration flows and the diaspora policies of the EU in light of those of its member states. The article begins with a brief mapping of 'EU diasporas' to show the complexity of this reality in the EU context. This examination is necessary to further understand the unique situation of the EU within diaspora research. In order to provide such mapping, existing research on emigration and immigration movements, closely linked to diaspora, is examined. Although not every group of migrants falls within the definition of 'diaspora' as described below, statistics on migration movements can still provide a useful starting point for diaspora research.

Based on the different scenarios present in the EU, the second part of the article focuses on the identification of the various diaspora policy strategies adopted by member states when dealing with their own diasporas as well as those within their territories. Two case studies are provided in order to answer the first research question of this article, namely, what the relationship is between EU member states and diasporas within their policy frameworks. The countries examined provide two fundamentally different scenarios, which offer a good sample of the diversified approach of the member states towards diasporas. To this end, France and Bulgaria were selected. The former is a founding member of the EU, with a long history of immigration and with a large diasporic presence within its territory. The latter, which more recently joined the EU, has by contrast experienced substantial flows of emigration of national citizens instead. However, as this study shows, the assumption that the cases differ to a large extent in terms of policy frameworks can be neither confirmed nor refuted. Overall, differences in their approach exist, particularly with France employing more elaborated policies regarding diasporas within its territory due to immigration being the focus of its political agenda. However, notable similarities are also present, especially with respect to education-related policies.

The last part of the article examines the institutional level of the EU, answering the second research question, namely, what the relationship is between the EU and diasporas within its policy framework. This question is not only of interest since in general the EU regularly provides guidance to its member states through its policy making. What is more, the inclusion of the topic of diasporas in EU-level policies seems useful, given its close link to some of the Union's current high priority issues, such as security, development and migration. However, not only does an explicit diaspora policy not exist at the EU level but, as the article shows, the overall consideration of the role of diasporas in other EU policy areas is rather sparse.

For the purposes of this analysis it must be noted that there is not a unanimously agreed-upon definition of the term 'diaspora' (Taylor et al 2014: 3f). What will be used here, unless otherwise specified, is the definition given by French scholar Gérard-François Dumont, who defines diaspora as 'a community of individuals living together on the same territory and having in common the conviction or belief of belonging, themselves or their families to another territory with which they maintain regular, symbolic or mythological relations' (Dumont 2014).[1]

2   Mapping diasporic communities in the European Union

When engaging in a discussion on diasporas and related policies in the context of the EU, it is useful to understand how this phenomenon manifests itself throughout the region. It is necessary to recognise where the main diasporas are located as well as where they originated from, as these factors largely determine the nature and type of policy frameworks adopted both at the EU and national levels. This part will thus provide a general mapping of EU diasporas with the aim of highlighting the complexity of the situation.

Indeed, the EU holds a peculiar position compared to other regions of the world as it has a significant and long history of both emigration and immigration, thus creating a twofold situation in terms of diaspora presence: Some member states may be viewed as mostly receiving countries, while others may be viewed as mostly sending countries. Since recent research on the geography of diasporas in the EU (such as that of Taylor et al 2014) has focused mainly on non-European immigrant communities, less information is available with regard to EU nationals themselves as diasporic communities both inside and outside the EU. While studies on emigration statistics provide useful indicators, one must bear in mind that not all migrants fall within the definition of diaspora.

To better understand the composition of diasporas in the EU, a further distinction for the sake of clarity is needed. On the one hand, one may identify diasporas originating from EU member states as a consequence of emigration ('emigrated diasporas'), among which two sub-groups may be

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1   Translated from the French by the authors. Original text cited by Dumont (2014) from one of his earlier works, 'Ensemble d'individus vivant sur un territoire et ayant en commun la certitude ou le sentiment d'être originaires, eux-mêmes ou leur famille, d'un autre territoire avec lequel ils entretiennent des relations régulières, symboliques ou mythologiques'.

identified, namely, (i) 'internal diasporas', formed as a consequence of internal migration movements from and to other member states; and (ii) 'external diasporas', meaning diaspora communities that emigrated outside of the EU. On the other hand, there are diasporas originating from outside the EU due to immigration ('immigrated diasporas').

As far as 'internal diasporas' are concerned, research focusing on emigration movements has observed that in the past decades, EU nationals have predominantly emigrated to other member states, particularly due to the free movement policies adopted at the EU level (Koikkalainen 2011), the wave of new accessions, as well as the more recent Euro-zone financial crisis (Weinar 2014: 7f). The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent state accessions to the EU in the early 2000s coincided with a rise in EU internal migration, which in certain cases led to the formation of diasporic communities (Favell 2008). EU 'internal diasporas' thus mainly originate from eastern EU countries (such as Poland, Bulgaria and Romania), but also, more recently, because of the Euro-zone crisis, from southern EU member states (mainly Greece and Portugal) and Ireland. Their main destinations are 'richer' member states in the western and northern EU, with Germany, the United Kingdom (UK) and France most commonly selected (Weinar 2014: 7).[2]

With respect to 'external diasporas', data is available only with regard to emigration flows. It has been found that the longstanding main destination countries for EU nationals have been the United States (US), Canada and Australia, as well as Argentina, with the US being the top destination in 19 out of 28 member states (Weinar 2014: 7). However, it should be kept in mind that the most prominent cases of 'external diasporas' of EU citizens were more a phenomenon of past centuries. In most cases, such communities have largely been assimilated by the receiving country and maintain weak ties with the homeland (Fassmann & Münz 1994). Today, however, mostly due to the ongoing economic crisis affecting some EU member states, new emigrating waves outside of Europe towards the above-mentioned destinations may lead to the formation of new diasporic communities of EU citizens. Therefore, this phenomenon should not be ignored.

With regard to EU diasporas originating from third countries and settled in EU member states, the situation is equally diverse. Indeed, the migration flows of the past decades towards Europe have greatly increased diaspora levels across member states and, with it, the attention of policy makers. Research has found that the largest diaspora communities present in the EU are Turkish, Moroccan and Filipino diasporas, with the first group spread over 19 member states. However, other considerably large groups also originate from India, Pakistan, Algeria and Egypt. Not surprisingly, the receiving countries again are mostly western and northern EU member states, particularly Germany, the UK, France and The Netherlands. Significantly, large diaspora communities can also be found in Portugal, Spain and Italy. Eastern EU member states, on the other hand, do not host very large diaspora groups besides those coming from their neighbouring countries (Taylor et al 2014: 23f, 28).

2   The geographical classification of EU member states as 'northern', 'eastern', 'southern' and 'western' reflects that adopted in Taylor et al 2014: 20.

It may be concluded that the EU is a mix between receiving and sending states (with the former being predominantly western and northern member states and the latter mostly eastern and more recently southern member states), with a plethora of diaspora communities originating from both inside and outside of the EU. Such a diverse and complex context poses great challenges at the policy-making level. The next parts address this issue further by giving a brief overview of the different diaspora policy frameworks adopted by EU member states towards engaging their own diasporas abroad and those living within their territories. Two case studies are then presented to compare the approaches of a receiving and a sending member state towards their immigrated and emigrated diasporas. Finally, the article discusses the question of whether the EU has a harmonised policy framework for engaging with diasporas at the institutional level.

3   Diaspora policy frameworks among European Union member states: A multifaceted approach

As the previous part illustrates, the EU offers a very diverse scenario in terms of diaspora geography. Consequently, substantial differences in the nature and the extent of diaspora policies and strategies exist. Governments engage to different degrees with their diasporas abroad and the communities in their countries, mainly based on what they choose to prioritise.

Diaspora scholar Agnieszka Weinar has usefully divided policies towards emigrated diasporas into two main categories: diaspora-building policies and diaspora-engagement policies. Diaspora-building policies aim to strengthen the cultural ties of diasporas with their home countries to help build a sense of 'community'. They usually include those governmental strategies of which the 'focus is on catering for the cultural needs of the communities of the same cultural background abroad, such as language schools, national curricula schools or active cultural programs for diaspora'. Almost all EU member states have such policies in place, with the exception of Austria, Denmark and Luxembourg, where the task is left to private institutions. In addition, but less commonly, states have also focused on identity building for certain professional groups (for example in the Czech Republic). Diaspora-engagement policies usually take the form of citizenship and direct-democracy policies (more a focus of the Baltic states or Poland), but also human capital policies and entrepreneurial outreach, as in the case of France and the UK (Weinar 2014: 11-13).

Similarly, with respect to policies aimed at immigrated diasporas, a uniform and harmonised practice remains lacking. Policies aimed at third country diasporas usually vary depending on the political agenda, although some similarities can be identified. In particular, member states have mostly engaged and mobilised diaspora groups in the field of development-cooperation and capacity building for diaspora organisations (Sinatti & Horst 2015). These policies take the form of national strategies, the establishment of forums and mechanisms to engage diasporas for development projects. Policies aimed at promoting peace in the country of origin have also been a widespread practice. Researchers have found that the countries engaging more actively with diasporas in their territory are mostly the UK and France, but also Belgium, Italy, Germany as well as

northern member states such as The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. These countries also tend to engage only with the larger diasporas, or with those with which they have historical ties, as in the case of Zimbabweans in the UK or Congolese in Belgium (Vorrath 2012: 26).

Having assessed the variety of member states' approaches and policies of engagement with their own diasporas or the diasporas within their territories, the next part will provide two case studies: one on France and one on Bulgaria. As mentioned previously, the rationale behind this choice is to illustrate the diversity of diaspora policies through two presumably very different situations. Three common parameters were used in the comparison, namely, citizenship, voting, and education and culture for the diaspora communities. These parameters were selected as indicators of the overall attitude towards diasporas and because of their strong link to democracy, which is a common value to both countries analysed. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge that this article understands both France and Bulgaria as well-established democracies within the terms of the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria for accession to the EU. Furthermore, the chosen parameters pay due regard to the ongoing discussion in diaspora scholarship on the relationship between diaspora and democracy (Mohamoud 2009; Koinova 2009; Kapur 2010; Ukraine Democracy Initiative 2017).

4 France: Keeping diasporas close, and the French diaspora (even) closer

Much like the EU, France has a long history as a country of mixed emigration/immigration flows that influences and is reflected in its diaspora policies. The circumstance of being simultaneously a receiving and sending country of diasporas, as well as some of the specificities of the legislative and policy options adopted, render the study of the French case particularly challenging.

France's mixed migration flows, and in particular its tradition as a receiving country of diasporas, are closely related to its history, economy and secular society. The latter, strongly influenced by the French Revolution, has contributed to the understanding of France as a safe haven for otherwise prosecuted diasporas (Cohen 2008).[3] The values of the French Revolution – liberty, equality and fraternity – have also found acceptance in the legislation, as French law prohibits the collection of ethnic or racial indicators (Conseil Constitutionnel 2007). Similarly, questions regarding religious membership have not been present in the census since 1872 (Farkas 2017: 14). Another important historic factor is France's colonial past, which still influences the country's geopolitics. The French territory not only is composed of metropolitan France, but also of the *départments, régions, térritoires et collectivités d'outre-mer* (DROM-TOM), or overseas France. The communities originating from these regions are composed of French (and EU) citizens, and the migratory movement towards metropolitan France is officially seen as internal. Finally, it is also worth mentioning that the French legal system allows for

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3   Eg, the Jewish community is particularly significant, with France being home to the third-biggest Jewish community in the world.

several pathways to obtaining French nationality, including *ius soli*, albeit subject to conditions (Rouhette & Rouhette-Berton (undated): French Civil Code articles 17-21). It also allows for and recognises dual citizenship, which translates into a 'rather liberal polic[y]' (Howard 2005: 710).

The aforementioned particularities have been legally enshrined to grant equality before the law and tackle racial, religious or ethnic discrimination, and thus represent good examples of France's diaspora engagement policies, and of the country's effort to support the integration and the democratic participation of immigrated diaspora communities. It is a fact that the recognition of the French citizenship of these individuals grants them access to certain social and political rights that are otherwise denied to foreigners, such as the right to vote (Rigoni 2013).[4] Nonetheless, some of these legal safeguards may hinder the assessment of the actual situation, the cultural and social diversity and identity, and potentially the needs, of these communities. Moreover, as Cohen (2008: 129) states regarding the rights of DROM-TOM citizens, 'it is important not to confuse formal rights with substance'. The reliance on formal rights, not accompanied by integration measures adapted to the specificities of the different communities, is linked to the failure of some of these diaspora engagement policies, as is illustrated by cases of radicalisation of French citizen members of diasporas. As Sheffer points out, 'when considering the motivations of Muslim fundamentalist groups in Europe … it is hard to determine whether their members are motivated by pure religious sentiments or whether they are mainly concerned with the political and cultural rights of their co-nationals in their homelands and host countries' (Sheffer 2006: 122).

Despite the flaws in the French legislation described above and the fact that direct democratic participation is not in all cases possible, diaspora communities in France are also 'extremely well organised and institutionalised' (Frankenhaeuser et al 2013: 89). These diaspora associations often fill the integration gap left by the law.[5] France has capitalised on this, engaging the diasporas in co-development initiatives, which consist of 'promoting knowledge transfer, assisting the foundation of small-scale businesses in the countries of origin, and supporting the activities of hometown associations, capacity building and network efforts' (Keusch & Schuster 2012: 9). In fact, the country is a 'pioneer in involving diaspora communities in its development actions' (Frankenhaeuser et al 2013: 87) and these diaspora engagement initiatives are included in several policy documents.

As far as the French emigrated diasporas are concerned, France has been referred to as 'a country which does not acknowledge emigration', rather understanding the citizens' absence from France as temporary (Weinar 2014: 12). Consequently, legal, political, cultural and economic

4   French electoral law does not recognise foreigners' right to vote, the only exception being EU citizens, who can vote in local elections. The country has neither signed nor ratified the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (Council of Europe 1992).
5   Eg, Berthommière, Maurel & Richard (2015) find a positive correlation between associativism and the identification with France and its institutions. According to the authors, this identification, on the other hand, plays an important role in the social integration.

ties to the country are preserved. In fact, 'France has a long history of granting political rights to its citizens abroad' (Beck & Weinar 2017: 12, 92). France not only allows its citizens residing abroad to vote, but also reserves twelve seats in the National Assembly for the representatives of the diaspora, and expatriates can also vote in local elections (Bauböck 2007: 2429).[6] Furthermore, it allows temporary migrants to choose between 'register[ing] abroad or vot[ing] for candidates in their home districts through postal voting or e-voting' (Beck & Weinar 2017: 92). The right to vote is even more extensive considering that French law allows for dual citizenship.

Connections with the diaspora are also preserved through diaspora-building initiatives, namely, through policies implemented in the areas of culture and education. In fact, there are 143 French institutes and French cultural centres in the world that are governed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beck & Weinar 2017: 96). They promote the French language and culture. Furthermore, through the *Agence pour l'enseignement français à l'étranger*, French expatriates have access to a network of almost 500 schools worldwide, which are approved by the French Ministry of Education and teach French curricula (AEFE (undated)). These *lycées français* constitute a unique network and are envisaged not only to disseminate French language and culture outside of the French territory, but also to provide for the education of the children of French families abroad. The fact that the students of these schools are allowed to transition to the French national school system without any examination confirms the notion that French emigration is seen as merely temporary. Through these initiatives, a wide area of Francophonie is created, in which French expatriates act as ambassadors of the country, its language and its culture.

The above-mentioned particularities make the French case an interesting one. On the one hand, the country has invested in a policy of integration of the immigrated diasporas through a multitude of initiatives, such as broad access to French citizenship, legal guarantees of non-discrimination, or engagement in co-development policies. The main criticism against these policies, however, is the mere reliance on formal rights which, in some cases, has led to non-satisfactory results. On the other hand, the French diaspora has not been forgotten. The diaspora-engagement and diaspora-building initiatives listed above, sponsored or developed by the French government, reveal the government's commitment to foster the ties of its expatriates with their home country, either through democratic participation or through culture and education, with the *lycées français* functioning as bridges for the return of younger generations to the country.

5   Bulgaria: Base and building blocks of the Bulgarian diaspora policies

The dynamic history of the Balkan region has contributed to a complex migratory situation, and Bulgaria is no exception. Although only a few people emigrated during the Soviet-backed political regime, its collapse in

6   Other than France, only Portugal, Croatia, Italy and Romania allow for the representation of the diasporas in national parliaments (Rigoni 2013).

1989 triggered a substantial wave of Bulgarians to permanently leave their country. Since the EU accession in 2007, emigration trends have been comparably lower but constant, possibly contributing to the increasingly severe aging of the population and its decline (Alexander 2017; Usheva 2011: 4f).[7] The large Bulgarian diaspora community is now estimated to have reached unprecedented levels, with a larger number of Bulgarians working abroad than in the country (Novinite 2015). Arguably, some of the most notable issues for the Bulgarian diaspora include citizenship, voting rights and education.

Regarding citizenship, interestingly, *de jure* someone who is of 'Bulgarian origin' is necessarily a 'Bulgarian citizen', since the Constitution provides for two separate terms: 'a person of Bulgarian origin' (ethnicity) and 'a Bulgarian citizen' (legal status). While the latter has the full legal rights and duties attached to citizenship, the former refers to someone of an ethnic Bulgarian origin and identity, who does not have to be a Bulgarian citizen and yet has the right to apply for naturalisation through a preferential regime, such as a reduced administrative fee requirement and an exemption from proof of language proficiency (Smilov & Jileva 2013: 6-13).[8] This may be viewed as part of the national policy to permanently attract people of Bulgarian origin from neighbouring non-EU countries, so as to decrease negative demographic trends (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006: 40; Ivanova 2015: 128). However, according to some authors this is also a symbolic citizenship aimed at 'settling historical scores with neighbouring countries' (Smilov & Jileva 2013: 16), most of them currently non-EU member states. Nevertheless, granting citizenship rights on a national level automatically leads to EU citizenship and political participation rights at EU level. However, according to article 9 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the acquisition of citizenship falls within the exclusive competences of the member states and, hence, regardless of the underlying motives behind national citizenship policies, the EU cannot influence them.

Compared to France, Bulgaria can be said to grant fewer political rights to Bulgarians abroad. Currently, only in-person voting is possible (Rigoni 2013: 7), requiring travel to a designated polling station in the country of permanent residence, which in some instances has been hindered by excessively long queues preventing people from voting (Novinite 2016b). Moreover, since 2016 Bulgaria substantially changed its voting procedures, including the introduction of mandatory voting. Proposals to decrease the number of polling stations worldwide, which would have limited the participation of the Bulgarian diaspora, were withdrawn following civil society opposition (Spirova (undated)).

In the 2016 presidential elections, voter turnout was the highest in Turkey, with 14 700 votes, followed by the UK (3 400), Spain (3 200) and Germany with 2 000 votes (*The Sofia Globe* 2016). Although the Bulgarian

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7   Despite these trends, Bulgaria has substantially failed to meet its asylum seekers EU relocation quotas. This may be due to the non-ethnically Bulgarian origin of asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle East.
8   Yet, it is interesting to note that the concept of 'Bulgarian origin' has evolved significantly. In 1940, when the country was still a monarchy, the meaning was 'all persons born of Bulgarian parents'.

diaspora abroad is unevenly distributed, and this undoubtedly impacts the voter turnout, in the case of Turkey, a more intricate set of historic reasons may play a role. Before 1989, the Soviet-backed ruling party introduced its policies of 'coercive assimilation' which included mandatory name changing for ethnic Turks, with the propaganda-based claim that this was a group of ethnic Bulgarians which has been forcibly assimilated by the Ottoman Empire (Smilov & Jileva 2013: 8; Bauböck 2007: 2441). After the fall of the Berlin Wall, many were 'allowed' to flee to Turkey and to obtain Turkish citizenship while retaining Bulgarian citizenship (Smilov & Jileva 2013: 7, 10). Some authors believe that the traditionally strong electoral support for the ethnically Turkish party in Bulgaria from the electoral votes cast in Turkey is an example of a minority using 'its external voting rights to bolster the representation of the minority remaining in the country' (Bauböck 2007: 2441). However, this view is questionable as it assumes a unified stance of the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey and implies that historical motivations are still crucial for the present position of this external Bulgarian diaspora group.

Given the complex migratory situation and the substantial size of the Bulgarian emigrating diaspora, there is a State Agency for Bulgarians Abroad and a special law for Bulgarians living abroad. Yet, arguably, a self-organised media forum, dating back to 2005, which relies on the facilitative role of world meetings of the Bulgarian Language Media (BGLM) is *de facto* more influential. The latter actively maintains the link between diaspora communities and the nation state, promotes BGLM journalists' coverage of the problems of the Bulgarian diaspora and has also contributed to the promotion of Bulgarian language, history and culture worldwide (Raycheva 2012). On the other hand, the Bulgarian state does not seem to focus on immigrating diaspora policies, which may be explained by a lack of societal interest in the matter. Perhaps the explicit goal of the Soviet-controlled government to 'create a homogenous one-nation state' and 'cultural purity' instilled a general perception that 'the real Bulgarian society' is mostly homogeneous, which has survived until today despite the country increasingly adopting EU policies on minority rights (Eminov 1997: 95; Dimitrov 2000: 5, 20). While this may be one possibility, some indications of an acknowledgment of the non-homogeneous nature of the society can also be found. For example, evening news in the Turkish language has been broadcast on Bulgarian national television for more than 17 years (Bulgarian National Television 2015).

As far as education is concerned, it is worth noting that Bulgaria provides university scholarships for academically outstanding high school graduates from third countries with an ethnic Bulgarian population to study in Bulgaria (Novinite 2016a). This seems to be an extension of the policy to reduce negative demographic trends. Very often ethnic Bulgarian communities, both inside and outside the EU, which are larger and in close geographical proximity, may have their own full-time or Sunday schools. For the 2017/2018 academic year the number of schools partially or fully financed by the Bulgarian state was 190 (Ministry of Education and Sciences of the Republic of Bulgaria 2017a). The state has also developed a national strategy, namely, 'Native language abroad', through which €750 000 (1,5 million Leva) are allocated for, *inter alia*, the support for the 'national, cultural and spiritual identity' of Bulgarians abroad by providing access to Bulgarian folklore-related musical instruments and

costumes, and dance and theatre classes (Ministry of Education and Sciences of the Republic of Bulgaria 2017b). In these areas, the support for the Bulgarian diaspora abroad has been notable, albeit arguably insufficient (Mintchev 2016:17). In addition, Bulgaria's 2018 presidency of the EU Council has been a missed opportunity to support the Bulgarian diaspora worldwide and to place diaspora issues on the EU agenda.

It may be concluded that the Bulgarian approach to diasporas is marked by a stronger investment in diaspora-building initiatives than in diaspora-engagement policies. The legal privileges of 'persons of Bulgarian origin', and the investment in Bulgarian schools and the promotion of Bulgarian culture abroad are examples of the general attempt to strengthen the ties of the Bulgarian diasporas with the country, despite some proposals to limit the political rights of those living abroad. At the same time, the country seems to be encouraging the emigration of ethnic Bulgarians, and underperforms when it comes to meeting its EU relocation quotas for asylum seekers that need human rights protection and would have a positive impact on the negative demographic trends. Moreover, the criticism that in the Bulgarian context formal mechanisms for diaspora engagement are less effective than non-formal measures such as the BGLM forum meetings may be an indication that the state needs to sponsor or develop more flexible initiatives, such as BGML, and a more engagement-centred approach such that of as the French. If Bulgaria builds more bridges, as is the case in France, to make the return of its youth and working age population easier, that may in the future partially offset the negative demographic trends.

The differences between the Bulgarian and French cases are evident. These can in part be explained by the two countries' contrasting realities, not only in terms of the migratory flows experienced, but also the historical, economic and demographic situations, which impact the adopted policies. Nonetheless, despite these differences, it is possible to draw parallels between the two cases, particularly regarding the big investment in diaspora-building initiatives directed at the countries' diasporas abroad. In both cases, the connection to the country is fostered through culture and education, with a strong focus on the promotion of the language. Furthermore, in both cases there indeed is an active acknowledgment of diasporas in terms of policy options, especially in the field of development. While France actively promotes the engagement of diasporas in co-development projects, Bulgaria actively attempts to engage its diasporas in the development of the country, namely, by promoting access to Bulgarian citizenship. Were the Bulgarian state to initiate an active diaspora engagement campaign similar to that of France, it would be sensible to exercise caution regarding the potential for Bulgarian populist rhetoric to exploit historical injustices and create ethnic tensions to the detriment of the Bulgarian-Turkish diaspora.

The two cases outlined above also illustrate how challenging the creation of a common EU diaspora policy would be since it would, in some respects, have to accommodate diametrically-opposing realities. Furthermore, many of these diasporas *de facto* consist of EU citizens and originate from internal EU migratory movements, which brings into

question the true meaning of EU citizenship, and the need to capitalise on this to the benefit of the internal market.[9] Nonetheless, the harmonisation at EU level would have to overcome legal constraints that, as was mentioned above regarding the question of citizenship, may even be enshrined in the treaties, and which the member states may not be willing to alter. However, the EU has shown an interest in engaging diasporas in some of its policies, and the following section sheds light on the developments in this area.

6   European Union and diasporas: A difficult relationship

While there is a broad range of distinct diaspora policies among EU countries, as it has been examined above, a comprehensive homogeneous diaspora policy is all but absent at the EU level. In the EU's legal regime, neither the TEU nor the TFEU contains provisions explicitly referring to diasporas. In addition, as will be shown at the end of this part, there seemingly is much reluctance on the part of the EU towards a stronger involvement in diaspora policies. This reticence disregards the fact that there is an apparent need to take action by the EU, which might play the role of a catalyst for the various policy approaches of its member states. Indeed, the EU is able to provide guidance for national diaspora policies, paying due respect to the economic, political, social and cultural character of diasporas. Such guidance is imperative to make the current patchwork of the existing policies more consistent, while incentivising member states that do not yet engage with diasporas to do so. Currently, it is up to each member state to choose its approach towards immigrating as well as emigrating diasporas.

The lack of a clear and active engagement at the policy level by the EU towards diasporas comes as a surprise in view of the obvious link between these groups and some of the EU's current high priority issues, such as security, development and migration. The link between these significant points on the Union's agenda and diasporas emphasises the necessity to include diaspora issues on EU policy level, as they could play a crucial role in successfully tackling these high priority issues. This would benefit both the EU and its members.

In addition, from the perspective of immigration, the need for a clear diaspora policy provided by the EU is supported by the fact that a significant decrease in the number of immigrants is not foreseeable in the near future. This seems true also despite the emergence of questionable border management, which is hostile to incoming migrants. Given the apparent link between immigration and diasporas, it is probable that diasporas will increasingly play a relevant role within EU borders.

With this in mind, the question arises as to what the current relationship is between the EU and diasporas within its policy framework. To answer this question, it must be noted that when it comes to EU-level policies with regard to its member states' emigrated diasporas, the EU almost entirely neglects the topic of emigration. Accordingly, the issue of

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9   For example, according to the 2014 census, the Portuguese immigrant community is the largest one in France, with over 600 000 people. For further information see (INED n.d.).

emigration is absent from both EU legislation and its policy framework. Weinar (2014: 1) gets to the heart of the matter by stating that 'emigration is hardly an EU-level affair' at all. Indeed, emigration is covered neither by today's comprehensive migration policy nor by EU legislation. This seems problematic, given the fact that there is an emerging need for EU member states 'to be more proactive on emigration and diaspora policies', especially in view of the emigration movements as a consequence of the economic crisis affecting some EU member states in recent years (Weinar 2014: 1).

Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that in the last two decades there has been a change in the EU's overall approach towards the phenomenon of diasporas. For a long time the term 'diaspora' in EU documents was used primarily in the context of economics (European Commission 2000: 17).[10] This seems plausible given the fact that diasporas generated considerable revenues, thereby contributing to 'stabilising local and regional growth' (Weinar 2008: 16f). Besides, it must be kept in mind that the EU was born as an economic union and only at the end of the last century became a political entity. This was reflected, for instance, in the outcome of the 1999 special European Council meeting in Tampere, where the need for 'a comprehensive approach to migration addressing political, human rights and development issues in countries and regions of origin and transit' was agreed upon (European Council 1999). Since then, also due to the apparent link to development, diasporas started to enter the EU comprehensive migration policy, though only in passing (Weinar 2008: 17).

This weak inclusion of diasporas into EU migration policies can already be seen in the European Commission's Communication 'Integrating Migration Issues in the European Union's Relations with Third Countries' of 2002, which underlines the potential of diaspora cooperation. Accordingly, the Commission states that '[i]n order to really make the step into outward migration one needs contacts for practical advice and support. Usually the practical aspects of migration are facilitated by family contacts or the wider network of the migrant diaspora' (European Commission 2002: 11). Moreover, in its 2002 communication, the Commission refers to the potential benefits for both sending and receiving countries to consider cooperation with diasporas. Thereby, it underlines the positive inputs migrants can provide in the local development of their home countries. It further underlines that in some cases governments of migrant-sending countries implemented 'active policies to intensify contacts with their diasporas and to involve them in the national development process, both in economic and political terms' (European Commission 2002: 16). Besides, the Commission mentions migrant-receiving countries and international organisations, which 'have experimented with "co-development" schemes aimed at involving the migrant diasporas in the development process of their country of origin' (European Commission 2002: 16).

However, as the remittance framework of the EU concerning the support of African diaspora organisations shows, such co-development activities were not undertaken within the domain of democratic

10   For example, regarding Kosovo: 'Some Kosovars consequently emigrated to Western Europe to form a *diaspora* of high economic potential' (European Commission 2000: 17).

governance and political institutions, but rather within the economic realm. Since the goal of the EU was the reduction of poverty and the improvement of livelihoods in receiving communities, interest on the part of the EU beyond the aspect of remittances with regard to migration and development was almost entirely absent (Mohamoud 2009: 9).

As things developed, the focus on the link between diasporas and development in the context of migration remained, albeit rather superficially. Nevertheless, while the 2002 communication lacked a definition of what is meant by diaspora, in 2005 the Commission gave some concrete orientations regarding migration and development, including a broad definition of the term.

Diaspora from a given country, therefore, includes not only the nationals from that country living abroad, but also migrants who, living abroad, have acquired the citizenship of their country of residence (often losing their original citizenship in the process) and migrants' children born abroad, whatever their citizenship, as long as they retain some form of commitment to or interest in their country of origin or that of their parents. In some extreme cases, 'people may still feel part of a country's diaspora even though their family has been living in another country for several generations' (European Commission 2005: 23).

Today, however, the EU Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs refers to the definition provided by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), namely, 'individuals and members of networks, associations and communities, who have left their country of origin, but maintain links with their homelands' (Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross 2011: 30; European Commission Migration and Home Affairs (undated)).

Furthermore, the 2005 communication establishes four characteristics regarding diasporas. First, the Commission sees diasporas as transnational communities, which might guarantee the success of development initiatives (Weinar 2008: 17). This transnational character is also emphasised with regard to EU funding. For instance, the Commission prefers 'projects in third countries involving diasporas in two or more member states' (European Commission 2005: 8, 30). In addition, the Commission encourages diaspora development organisations to set up mechanisms 'that could ensure appropriate representation of their interests at EU level' (European Commission 2005: 6, 24). Second, the communication seems to distinguish between diaspora members and the narrower group of migrants, who are said to be more inclined to return to their home countries. According to Weinar, this distinction is to some extent problematic, as the latter group should be included with the former in view of the broad definition given above. This creates a certain ambivalence in the Commission's position (Weinar 2008: 19).

The third characteristic concerns the legal status of diaspora members. In this regard, the Commission not only acknowledges the need for support regarding the mapping of developing countries' diasporas, but also places an emphasis on the implementation of 'databases where members of diasporas … can register on a voluntary basis' (European Commission 2005: 24). This seems to refer mainly to those individuals legally staying and working. Thus, for the Commission the legal status is an indicator of being part of the diaspora. Finally, for the European Commission the fourth special characteristic of diasporas refers to its organisational side.

The regular use of the term 'member of diaspora' in EU documents suggests that some sort of organisational structure or at least some collective identity is expected by the EU. Additionally, in the eyes of the Commission, diaspora organisations must fulfil a certain degree of qualification to be able to become a partner in the development policy of their country. Hence, the organisation has to be trustworthy and well-established (Weinar 2008: 19). The parameters to measure these requirements, however, remain unclear.

With reference to more recent EU activities regarding diasporas, an increased focus with regard to the enhancement of diaspora engagement in the field of development must be noted. This is underlined by the summit declaration made in the context of the 2014 Africa-European Union Strategic Partnership, which explicitly includes the commitment 'to ensure that human rights of all migrants, including those of the diaspora … are fully respected' (Council of the European Union 2014: para 56). Furthermore, an action plan for the period 2014-2017 was adopted, which includes diasporas as one of its main priorities and asks for action with regard to '[s]trengthen[ing] EU and Africa policy frameworks and institutional capacities for enhancing diaspora engagement' (Africa and Europe in Partnership 2014: 4). Despite these important steps, results in the form of a clear, homogeneous diaspora policy provided by the EU are so far absent with respect to development as well as any other of the above-mentioned high priority issues. Indeed, in the latest goal-setting document published by the European Commission, the 2016 'Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals', diaspora is barely mentioned (European Commission 2016). This is evidence of the EU's ongoing reluctance towards the effective mobilisation and active engagement of diasporas.

In this regard, three common concerns are frequently expressed by EU officials and experts, as outlined by Vorrath with respect to EU development engagement with African diasporas. One of these seems to be the suitability of diaspora organisations as potential partners. Diasporas are regularly fragmented into sub-groups with multiple and sometimes even (partly) contradictory interests. Therefore, the task to identify an organisation holding a sufficient degree of undisputed, or at least widely-accepted, legitimacy and representativeness for the whole diaspora in a country may be fraught with difficulties. Moreover, one must keep in mind that the EU, being a supranational organisation, mostly interacts with governmental bodies rather than with non-state actors such as diaspora organisations. Indeed, the usual relationship between diasporas, their homelands and the receiving countries becomes more complex as soon as the EU enters the diplomatic stage. For instance, cooperation activities between the EU and diasporas could very well affect certain member states' interests. This is true especially with respect to those member states in which diaspora groups reside. As a result, the EU prefers classic diplomatic means to engage with diasporas, rather than addressing the issue on a policy level (Vorrath 2012: 23-25). In this context, it must also be noted that ultimately it is up to the member states to decide with how much power they invest the EU regarding its engagement with both immigrated and emigrated diasporas (TFEU 2012: art 5). In fact, the question of competences is closely related with that of member states' sovereignty, which is indeed a highly sensitive issue at the political level.

7 Conclusion: A call for a comprehensive European Union policy framework

To summarise, it seems that in the absence of a sufficient EU framework to address diaspora communities within the EU, member states are moving towards diaspora engagement at various speeds and from different directions.

The two case studies provide examples of countries with significant historical differences and, therefore, two distinct approaches to the needs of the diasporas. The most notable distinction is that France provides rather extensive political participation rights to its citizens abroad, while Bulgaria has been close to restricting these rights *de facto*. There seems to be more structure and active involvement in France's approach to both its own and incoming diasporas. This need for structure aligns with the image of France as a predominantly 'receiving state'. However, France seems to be unable to implement the distinction between 'formal rights and substance'. Bulgaria, on the other hand, seems to be almost advertising its citizenship to those who would satisfy the criteria for ethnic Bulgarians, predominantly living in neighbouring countries, to decrease the population decline due in large part to ageing and emigration. If it were to extend its welcoming approach beyond ethnic Bulgarians to a modest number of asylum seekers and refugees, this would benefit both the country's demographics and the EU's more equitable distribution of asylum claims.

One common approach of the two countries is the emphasis on education for their diaspora communities. This may potentially preserve and strengthen the link between the home state and the diaspora community and, in the wider EU context, help preserve and promote the language diversity. This undoubtedly has an impact on the employability of individuals from the diaspora communities within the EU's internal market, the very foundation of the Union, which arguably remains the most powerful driver of EU policies.

In this sense, the EU should develop a comprehensive policy framework for member states to engage and mobilise diasporas as potentially important actors on multiple levels, including in areas of politics, culture and economics. This is particularly the case with regard to diaspora groups coming from third countries and residing in the member states. If rightly engaged, they could play a key role beyond merely the realm of development, but also in areas of democracy building in their countries of origin. However, it is likely that at the EU level the differences between member states would be too significant to allow for successful negotiations of a common strategy. Perhaps this is one reason why diaspora engagement has not made it onto the EU agenda. Another possibility is that the diaspora issue is too closely related to the citizenship domain of which, as mentioned above, the exclusive competence rests with the member states and, therefore, is beyond the EU's legislative mandate. Nevertheless, it may still be possible for the EU to initiate a discussion among the member states on this topic to tap into the potential for positive developments that diaspora communities could offer, on both the national and the EU level.

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