

Refugees, asylum seekers and democracy

With the global refugee population reaching an estimated 19.5 million by mid-2015, compared to 10.4 million in 2011, the world has seen an unprecedented increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers. Although 86 per cent of refugees are hosted by countries in the Global South, the Global North is also experiencing an exceptional rise in the flow of refugees. While ongoing policy debates are largely focused on the humanitarian, social and economic implications of large-scale forced migration, issues related to refugees' and asylum seekers' civic and political inclusion and their potential to participate in political life and decision-making processes in both host and origin countries have not been adequately explored.

Refugees have the potential to make an impact on the political life of both their host and origin countries, as they often maintain transnational links with their homelands while at the same time becoming part of the host society. Recognizing the dual role of refugees and asylum seekers as political actors in their host and origin countries, the 'Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Democracy' project aims to generate comparative knowledge on the impact of refugees and asylum seekers on political life through formal and informal means of political participation. Through this project, policymakers, including political parties, legislators, and organizations of refugees and asylum seekers, will be provided with relevant country examples and policy recommendations for the effective inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in civic and political life.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The 'Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Democracy' project will be implemented over an 18-month period, from November 2016 to April 2018.

The project will produce a report based on findings of case studies carried out in eight host countries with high numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, offering cross-country insights into the experiences of refugee and asylum seeker communities originating from five of the largest source countries as specified in the table below:

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS	
Host country	Origin country
Germany	Afghanistan Syria
Kenya	Somalia South Sudan
Lebanon	Syria
South Africa	Democratic Republic of Congo
Sweden	Somalia Syria
Turkey	Syria
Uganda	Democratic Republic of Congo South Sudan
United Kingdom	Afghanistan



The case studies will be developed on the basis of review of the relevant literature, statistical data, media reports, and legal documents, as well as interviews with refugees and/or asylum seekers and representatives of organizations or state/municipal authorities working on issues affecting refugees and asylum seekers.

The case studies will be presented in a roundtable meeting in September 2017. This roundtable will bring together the case study authors and experts working on issues relevant to the civic and political inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers, with the aim to discuss the research findings and formulate recommendations that will inform the development of the final report.

The final report will be launched in Brussels, Berlin, Tunis and Nairobi in 2018 and serve as a basis for advocacy and future policy reforms in the field of migration management and political inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, selected case studies and a policy brief highlighting the key findings of the report will be produced in a digital format and made available for free download through International IDEA's website.

The project is funded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung.

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ABOUT INTERNATIONAL IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. International IDEA's mission is to support sustainable democratic change by providing comparative knowledge, and assisting in democratic reform, and influencing policies and politics.

Headquartered in Stockholm, International IDEA has regional programmes and partnership networks in Africa and West Asia, Asia and the Pacific, Wider Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The project 'Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Democracy' builds on International IDEA's 21 years of experience in producing and sharing knowledge in the area of political participation. International IDEA's Strategy 2012–17 emphasizes the development of policy options to help marginalized groups overcome exclusion from governance structures and processes.