Chapter 23

Diaspora Policies, Consular Services and Social Protection for Tunisian Citizens Abroad

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23.1 Diaspora Characteristics and Home Country Engagement

This chapter will present the general institutional framework by which Tunisian authorities interact with nationals abroad. In doing so, it will focus on the policies, programs and services offered by Tunisian authorities to respond to the social protection needs of nationals abroad across five specific policy areas (family, health-care, pension, unemployment and guaranteed minimum resources). Consequently, the chapter helps to understand the conditions of access of different categories of individuals to the diaspora and consular policies of Tunisia and, more generally, to what extent the home country protects its nationals abroad.

As explained in the chapter, the country's diaspora policies have given priority to cultural ties between Tunisian nationals residing abroad and their home country, diaspora's financial support for the home country and voting rights following to the 2011 democratic turn that has totally reconfigured the relations between political elites and citizens. At the same time, social protection for diaspora is limited to healthcare, pensions and family benefits, which is explained by the fact that the Tunisian social protection system is limited for all citizens whether they live abroad and or in Tunisia.

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23.1.1 The Tunisian Diaspora and its Relations with the Homeland

Emigration to Europe is a phenomenon that strongly shapes the Tunisian society. Since mid-1900s, Tunisia has experienced a large wave of emigration towards Europe. Today, about 10% of the Tunisian population is living abroad and 83.5% of them reside in the European Union (EU). France, in particular, is a major destination country as it hosts 58.5% of the total Tunisian emigrant population (followed by Italy, Libya and Germany). The Tunisian emigrant population in Europe varies depending the motivations for migration (studies, work, exile, etc.), its legal status (documented or not) and its patterns of acquisition of the destination country's nationality (it is estimated that 219,037 Tunisian nationals are dual citizens).¹

Looking at the Tunisian state's reaction towards emigration, authorities have historically dealt with emigration by trying to protect its non-resident nationals through agreements with European destination countries. The state aimed to promote especially Tunisian workers and students abroad, in the hope that this would trigger benefits back to Tunisia. At the same time, it aimed to strengthen the national, cultural and identity ties of emigrants with Tunisia.

The progressive closing of pathways for legal migration towards the end of the twentieth century has led to increased illegal migration which has also become one of country's policy priorities. To support this argument, it is to be noted that Tunisia was, along with Morocco, among the first countries to sign a re-admission agreement with Italy in 1998. However, while Tunisia has been very active in the area of migration control, it has simultaneously developed policies to encourage the mobility of its citizens and trigger investments in Tunisia. Today, the profile of the diaspora hardly fits the image of the post-war emigrants: new generations of Tunisians abroad are mostly born abroad with two nationalities and they have developed cultural affinities with another country. As they can no longer be considered "migrants", Tunisia struggles to recognize them as full and equal citizens despite their national and cultural connections with other countries (Boubakri 2009).

23.1.2 Diaspora Infrastructure

Historically, Tunisia's infrastructure for its diaspora relies mostly on its consular network and ministry-level institutions. Today, Tunisia counts with 62 embassies and 24 consulates spread all over the world. Paris, Nice, Marseille, Lyon, Milan and Grenoble are the first most important consular districts.

Beyond consulates, nationals abroad have been dealt with a series of institutions that varied over time. At the time of the national independence (1954), the so-called "Tunisian workers abroad" (TTE) were considered as a critical response to the

¹ *Office des Tunisiens à l'étranger* (2006).

country's labour market issues. For this reason, in 1967, the Tunisian Government created the Office for Employment and Vocational Training (*Office de l'Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle*, OTE) that organized the direct recruitment of unskilled Tunisian workers for industry and building sectors in European countries. The Tunisian Government expected that workers would migrate temporarily and then return, which led scholars such as Sayad (1999) to postulate that the generation of Maghrebi migrants in France underwent a process of double absence by which they were disconnected from both their home and host countries. In response to this phenomenon, Tunisia adopted the principle of dual citizenship in 1975 "probably[as] a way to recognize that Tunisians in Europe would not return" (Brand 2006).

As stated above, Tunisia has historically promoted legal migration by signing agreements with European countries and with countries outside Europe (Canada, Australia, etc.), while trying to strengthen links with Tunisian emigrants in order to encourage their participation in local development in the homeland (Katterbach 2010). The OTE was created to this end to implement these policies through various cultural and social assistance programs.² To this day, it publishes scientific reports, analyses, and expert notes on the state of Tunisian emigration. Originally, it belonged to the State Secretariat for Migration and Tunisians Living Abroad of the Ministry of Social Issues and Solidarity. Since January 2014, the OTE is subordinated to the Ministry of Social Issues and Solidarity (similarly to the pre-2012 period). The OTE has 14 social *attachés* in Tunisian embassies and consulates and organizes cultural events, summer camps for Tunisian children living abroad and language courses to foster Tunisian migrants' ties to the country.

After the fall of the Ben Ali regime in 2011, emigrants – through elites and leaders of civil society associations active in the EU countries of residence – expressed a significant desire to participate in process of rebuilding the country. Migration issues became part of the important social, economic and political changes brought about by the revolution, which materialized in a new attitude on the part of public authorities regarding the Tunisian community abroad.

Following the post-revolution election in 2011, authorities therefore created the State Secretariat for Migration and Tunisians living Abroad (SEMTE), under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs, mostly to acknowledge the importance of the country's emigrant communities.³ SEMTE works on this task in collaboration with various ministries, including the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. It aims to instill a sense of belonging to the homeland among Tunisians abroad; ensure effective assistance to Tunisians abroad; protect the rights of the community; improve access to social protection; improve the quality of administrative support for Tunisians abroad; support community integration; and strengthen community involvement in the current democratic process. In 2014, however, the State Secretariat was suppressed and its

² Available at: <http://www.social.gov.tn/index.php?id=52&L=0>. Accessed 06 April 2020.

³ Available: <http://www.social.gov.tn/index.php?id=12&L=0>. Accessed 06 April 2020.

responsibilities downgraded to the Office of Tunisians Abroad. It was reinstated in 2017 under the name the State Secretariat of Migration and Tunisians Living Abroad. Overall, in line with the political developments of the country in recent years, Tunisia's diaspora infrastructure is thus characterized by a certain level of volatility.

23.1.3 Key Engagement Policies

The General Direction of Consular Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for dealing with all matters concerning the consular domain, in particular, the protection of the rights and interests of Tunisian citizens living abroad, as defined by the bilateral agreements and according to the provisions of the 1963 Vienna Convention for consular relations. The General Direction of Consular Affairs ensures the follow-up of the activities of consular missions and sections accredited abroad, in coordination with the Tunisian ministries and specialized agencies.

Tunisian embassies and consulates abroad also provide services such as consular registration and authentication or legalization of documents. The services offered also include registering births, marriages and deaths, certifying copies of identity documents, applications for conversion to Islam, and nationality procedures (certificate of nationality and acquisition of Tunisian nationality by the Tunisian mother and the foreign father for the benefit of their minor child born abroad or by the Tunisian mother and the foreign father for the benefit of their minor child born abroad to a non-Tunisian father who died or disappeared). Finally, Tunisian embassies and consulates offer citizen services such as liquidation of the assets of Tunisians who die abroad, dealing with conjugal disputes, national service or help with the importation of vehicles and goods during a temporary or definitive return to Tunisia.

For instance, consulates offer a consular registration for any citizen legally residing abroad, at any Tunisian diplomatic or consular mission abroad.⁴ The head of the family (the husband) or the wife if it is impossible to register the husband (in case of illegal residence, for example) is invited to register in the consular register, but they remain registered in their country of origin. To obtain any documents (passport, dispensation from military service, copy of the criminal record or any authentication of documents), an identity card, fiscal stamp and photo identification are required.

All Tunisian embassies and consulates abroad also offer a social service that provides information on social security coverage, as discussed below.⁵

⁴Temporary registration is granted to those who do not have a residence permit. Available at: <https://www.diplomatie.gov.tn/en/nc/quick-access/e-services/>. Accessed 06 April 2020.

⁵Available at: <http://www.cgt-paris.diplomatie.gov.tn/index.php?id=165>. Accessed 06 April 2020.

To strengthen cultural ties with diaspora, the Tunisian House (*Maison de la Tunisie*) was created in 1953 to accommodate Tunisian students. Similarly, an Arabic language program was created for the younger generations of the diaspora in Europe, with a view to rooting them in their national identity. Overall, every consulate abroad has to propose Arabic courses to citizens abroad, and lessons are offered free of charge. In France, for instance, the Tunisian House in Nice offers Arabic courses for Tunisian children 6–15 years on a weekly basis.

OTE has a series of activities in the cultural and educational fields that are designed to strengthen ties with the diaspora. For Tunisian children abroad, OTE organizes Arabic language summer classes in Tunisia during the summer season. These classes will take place in the centers and schools reserved for this program. For Tunisian students and adults abroad, OTE organizes, in collaboration with the Bourguiba Institute of Modern Languages, three sessions of Arabic language for the benefit of Tunisian students and adults residing abroad. Similarly to what other states such as Israel or Morocco offer, during school holidays, OTE organizes exploratory trips, allowing young Tunisians living abroad to visit their country of origin with the idea of confronting them with “the richness of the national heritage”. The OTE also organizes, on an annual basis, exploration trips for Tunisians abroad aged 65 and over, enabling them to visit their country of origin and strengthen ties with their country and to promote their culture in their country of residence. OTE organizes camps during the summer season for young Tunisians living abroad between 9 and 14 years old. These camps are intended to help preserve the ties that bind them to their country of origin.

Looking at economic policies, the Tunisian Investment Incentives Code is the main reference for both domestic and foreign investors. Its aim is to ensure freedom to invest and to reinforce the Tunisian economy’s openness to the outside, while ensuring non-discriminatory treatment of direct foreign investment in the Tunisian legislation. It sets the ground rules for the creation of projects and incentives for investment in Tunisia by both Tunisian and foreign investors, resident, non-resident, or in partnership. It contains a set of financial and tax benefits and covers the majority of sectors.

In Tunisia, a series of tax incentives aim to encourage Tunisians abroad to invest in Tunisia by facilitating investment on legal, administrative and regional levels. Tunisians abroad enjoy tax benefits all over Tunisia. The investment of Tunisian emigrants is facilitated through one-stop-shops and further promoted through special incentives such as tax and customs exemptions. For instance, all Tunisians living abroad have the right to import their own car into Tunisia and clear it by payment of all duties and taxes due in Tunisian Dinars without production of import authorization. This Special Regime managed by the customs allows Tunisians living abroad to import a passenger vehicle or commercial vehicle with a gross vehicle under 3.5 tones (pick-up truck).⁶

⁶Decree n° 2009–2162 of 14 July 2009.

In addition, in regions that are classified as areas of investment, any investment operation (owned by foreigners or by Tunisians) receives 10 years of tax exemption and, in agricultural regions, incentives through the Agency for the Promotion of Agriculture Investment (APA). Furthermore, Tunisian entrepreneurs living abroad have the right to import goods related to their core business activities (industrial, commercial or agricultural) without paying customs duties. Lastly, to support migrant engagement in the economy of the home country and avoid double taxation, Tunisia has ratified non-double-taxation treaties with around 50 countries, including nearly all European countries.⁷

As for electoral rights, Tunisians abroad have the right to vote in the presidential elections since 1988 but, because of the authoritarian regime, it is considered that residents abroad did not have actual access to political participation until 2011. After the fall of the former regime in 2011, the president of the High Authority for Achieving the Objectives of the Revolution, Political Reform and Democratic Transition defended the extension of the right to vote for Tunisians abroad in parliamentary elections. In response to “emigrant lobbying” (Lafleur 2013), a new electoral commission, known by its acronym ISIE, was created in May 2011 to supervise elections abroad where six districts had been created to represent the diaspora.⁸ Overall, 454 polling centers were created, including in places outside the consular system: schools, offices of associations, centers, municipalities, etc. Indeed, the Tunisian revolution introduced the participation of Tunisians abroad in elections for the National Assembly and representation within the National Assembly.

In the first post-revolution election held in October 2011, the Tunisian diaspora was able to elect its representatives in the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) in order to enhance political participation for Tunisians abroad. 18 seats of the assembly were reserved to representatives from the diaspora (eight for France; three for Italy; three for America; three for the Arab countries; one for Germany; three for the Americas and the rest of the world). The new Tunisian Constitution that passed in January 2014 acknowledges the role of Tunisians living abroad. Two articles of the Constitution clearly address this group: Article 55 that guarantees the right to vote and the right to be represented in the Assembly; and Article 74 that grants dual citizens the right to run for the position of President of the Republic, under the condition that they pledge to give up the second nationality if elected.

Tunisians residing abroad can cast a ballot in home country elections at the national level. To be allowed to vote for presidential or legislative election, the basic

⁷South Africa / Senegal / Mali / Cameroon / Ethiopia / Mauritius / Burkina Faso / Jordan / Egypt / United Arab Emirates UAE / Pakistan / Sultanate of Oman / Qatar / Lebanon / Yemen / Syria / Kuwait / Sudan / Saudi Arabia / France / Germany / Austria / Norway / Italy / Denmark / Sweden / United Kingdom of Great Britain and of Northern Ireland / Spain / Turkey / Romania / Czech Republic / Poland / Switzerland / Netherlands / Hungary / Luxembourg / Portugal / Malta / Belgium / Hellenic Republic / Serbia / Canada / United States of America / South Korea / Indonesia / China / Iran / Vietnam.

⁸The ISIE, then headed by Kamel Jendoubi, announced the creation of 18 parliamentary seats (out of 217).

criteria are to be 18 years old; to have no criminal record; to be registered in a Tunisian consulate abroad and to initiate the registration process. Tunisians can vote in person at consulates, embassies and polling stations abroad, but there is no possibility to vote by proxy.⁹ Similarly, nationals residing abroad can stand as candidates and be elected in elections held at the national level, namely for the Assembly of the Representatives of the People or President.

23.2 Diaspora Policies and Social Protection in Tunisia

Before looking at Tunisia's engagement with citizens abroad in five core area of social protection, it is important to note that the Tunisian welfare state suffers from a series of limitations. Only 37% of Tunisia's population of 11 million contributes to pension payments, only half of the population is covered by health insurance, and there are no unemployment benefits for people who lose their jobs. Moreover, although nearly a quarter of Tunisians (23%) receive benefits, less than a half (40%) of those who do are among Tunisia's poorest people.

The Tunisian social security system is essentially run by the state. There are two funds under the state supervision which manage the statutory social security schemes: the National Pension and Social Contingency Fund (*Caisse Nationale de Retraite et de Prévoyance Sociale*, CNRPS) for the public sector and the National Social Security Fund (*Caisse Nationale de Sécurité Sociale*, CNSS) for the private sector. The board of administration of these funds is composed on a tripartite basis (the state, employers, and employees).

The CNSS was founded through Law 60–30 of 14 December 1960 to extend social insurance coverage to the private sector. The CNSS is a public organization with financial autonomy, but it is overseen by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The main CNSS social insurance schemes cover the following occupational groups: private-sector employees, excluding agriculture; employees in agriculture; members of agricultural cooperatives; self-employed, including in agriculture; Tunisians working abroad; students; low-income earners (including construction laborers, domestic workers, independent fishermen and small farmers, amongst others); artists.

The social protection regime for Tunisian workers abroad (known in French as *Régime de sécurité sociale aux travailleurs tunisiens à l'étranger*) is the institution that provides social security for Tunisians living abroad, following the Decree No. 89-107 of 10 January 1989 that extended the social security system to Tunisian workers abroad, whether employed or self-employed.¹⁰

⁹ Available at: <https://www.diplomatie.gov.tn/nc/acces-rapide/nos-missions-a-letranger/>. Accessed 06 April 2020.

¹⁰ The Decree is available at: <http://www.cnss.tn/documents/54202/130173/D.89-107.pdf>. Accessed 06 April 2020.

Additionally, the Tunisian Government has concluded 13 bilateral social security agreements with the following countries: France, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, Germany, Austria, Spain, the Netherlands, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Libya and Portugal. These agreements uphold the principles of equality of treatment and transfer of rights to the country of residence.

For decades, France has welcomed the largest number of Tunisian residents abroad. France signed a social security agreement with Tunisia in 2003, which allowed Tunisian workers carrying out their professional activities in France to be subject to the social security schemes applicable in France. Among the key rights granted is the right for Tunisian women working in France who meet the conditions for receiving maternity insurance benefits in kind and in cash to retain this benefit when transferring their residence to France. Tunisian workers in France whose condition immediately requires health care during a temporary stay in Tunisia during a leave of absence, respectively, shall receive these benefits for a period not exceeding 3 months. The dependents of a worker who resides in Tunisia while the worker resides in France shall receive sickness and maternity insurance benefits in kind. The dependents of a Tunisian worker benefit from immediate sickness and maternity insurance benefits when they reside temporarily in France.

Pensioners and early retirees who are entitled to sickness and maternity insurance benefits in kind under the legislation of only one of the two signing states and who reside in the other state shall receive benefits in kind in the country of residence. In term of family benefits, it is possible to aggregate the periods of insurance completed in Tunisia for the purpose of qualifying for family benefits. The payment of family allowances to the children of the worker, early retiree, annuitant or pensioner is maintained until the children reach the age of 18. Family allowances are limited to four children.

To support Tunisian citizens abroad, embassies and consulates offer a number of social services. They provides information on social security coverage, help in the treatment of marital conflict, health problems, judicial and administrative difficulties in addition to counseling and information. Social *attachés* are key in this regard, as their job is to defend the interests of the Tunisian community abroad in the area of social protection. They are assigned to every Tunisian consulate and embassy in Europe, Canada and the Arab world. In addition to these services, Tunisians abroad can find information about social risks associated with living abroad and their welfare entitlements while living abroad on the website of the National Health Insurance Fund.¹¹

¹¹ Available at: http://www.cnam.nat.tn/tun_etranger.jsp. Accessed 06 April 2020.

23.2.1 Unemployment

In Tunisia, unemployment allocation is offered under very strict conditions. Tunisian national residing abroad, as they are not employed/insured against unemployment in Tunisia, do not have access to unemployment benefits. With respect to employment services offered to Tunisian citizens who plan on moving abroad, neither the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nor Tunisian embassies or consulates provide professional training, cash or in-kind benefits in situation of unemployment. They also do not repatriate unemployed nationals residing abroad.

Similarly, the National Employment Service does not offer any training program before emigration that aims specifically to prepare nationals for employment abroad. However, the National Employment Service's website has a dedicated page to Tunisian workers abroad¹², where it lists jobs announcements in different countries.

Lastly, the role of social *attachés* in consulates in the area of unemployment consists in the provision of information on how to find a job or access unemployment benefits of the destination country.

23.2.2 Health Care

In Tunisia, health insurance is managed by the *Caisse Nationale d'Assurance Maladie* (CNAM). The welfare scheme in Tunisia is compulsory for the entire population. It differs according to the socio-professional category. The insured's spouse and minor children are entitled to social security benefits and therefore to health insurance. To receive benefits from social security, one must either have worked at least 50 days during the last two quarters or have worked at least 80 days during the last four quarters.

Since 1989, Tunisian workers abroad have the possibility to voluntarily join their home country's social security system. This social protection regime concerns: salaried workers; non-wage earners; agricultural and non-agricultural workers; the unemployed; public officials; supplementary beneficiaries of the worker (i.e. wife, children and other dependents); and students who continue their studies. With this scheme, Tunisian workers abroad and their family members residing in Tunisia can receive health benefits in kind.

The applicant must submit to the National Social Security Fund a birth certificate extract less than 3 months old, a copy of the National Identity Card, a work certificate or other documents attesting the exercise of a professional activity abroad and an official request¹³.

To benefit from this regime, the Tunisian worker abroad is obliged to join the National Social Security Fund and choose an income class used as a basis for the

¹² Available at: <http://www.aneti-international.tn/en>. Accessed 06 April 2020.

¹³ Available at: <http://www.cnss.tn/documents/10156/25391/P304.pdf>. Accessed 06 April 2020.

calculation of contributions and benefits in cash, to mention the affiliation number in all correspondence or contact the National Fund, and to pay contributions quarterly in the first 15 days after each quarter.

To register family members, the Tunisian worker abroad must file with one regional and local offices of the CNAM, a birth certificate of less than 3 month of the spouse and each dependent child.

Consulates assist nationals living abroad with access to healthcare indirectly, providing information on rights to healthcare, types of insurance, documents needed for access to healthcare insurance and bilateral social security agreements through the website of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Since Tunisia has bilateral agreements on healthcare benefits with the most important destinations of Tunisians abroad, embassies and consulates in these host countries provide information on access to these benefits on their websites (these agreements uphold the principles of equal treatment and transfer of rights to the country of residence). In embassies and consulates, a social service provides information on rights to pension and invalidity insurance and bilateral social security agreement on pension insurance between Tunisia and other countries.

23.2.3 Pensions

In Tunisia, pensions are regulated according to the social insurance scheme. Pensions can be received at the standard retirement age of 60 years, assuming a minimum of 120 months of contributions have been made to the scheme. Pension benefits are calculated as percentages of the employee's end-of-career salary on the basis of which they paid contributions for a minimum of 2 years. The minimum pension for public sector employees is 66.7% of the national minimum salary (known by its acronym as SMIG), which is an inter-trade minimum wage.

The pension system faces deficits, by conservative estimates, with the result that the most vulnerable members of the society, such as the self-employed, often remain uncovered by pension schemes.

The workers concerned by the social protection regime for Tunisian workers abroad benefit from the old-age pension and invalidity benefits schemes. The age of entitlement to old-age pension is 65 years old. However, people can apply for a retirement pension from the age of 60. The old-age pension rate is set at 30% of the average reference income.

Consulates assist nationals living abroad with access to pensions indirectly, providing information on rights to pension insurance, types of insurance, documents needed for access to pension insurance and bilateral social security agreements through the website of the Ministry of Social Affairs. For instance, in the bilateral agreement between Tunisia and Italy, the survivors of a pensioner or a deceased worker receive their pension.

Since Tunisia has bilateral agreements on pension benefits with the most important destinations of Tunisians abroad, embassies and consulates in these countries

provide information on access to these benefits on their websites. In embassies and consulates, a social service provides information on rights to pension and invalidity insurance and bilateral social security agreements on pension insurance between Tunisia and other countries.

Lastly, an important measure targeting old-age Tunisians living abroad is the repatriation in case of death. The Tunisian state pays for the repatriation of deceased citizens. It is a consular practice and a service offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The procedure is carried out by the consulate, in collaboration with the family of the deceased. The conditions for repatriation are that death must have occurred in the competent consular country, that a proof of Tunisian nationality must be provided and that the deceased does not have had any legal impediments in the host country. The documents to be provided are the death certificate and either the Tunisian identity document or the birth certificate. The Tunisian authorities pay all the repatriation and administrative costs.

23.2.4 *Family-Related Benefits*

In Tunisia, family benefits are paid for children younger than 16 (18 if an apprentice, 21 in the case of students or the insured's children providing care for brothers and sisters, no age limit if disabled). Allowances are paid for up to three children.

The social protection regime for Tunisian workers abroad and bilateral social security agreements extend this right to Tunisian workers abroad. Family allowances are granted to children who remain in Tunisia, up to a maximum of four children.

Beyond benefits per se, Tunisian authorities have also developed numerous cultural and educational programs (with a focus on Arabic language classes) targeting the younger generations in Europe with a view of stimulating their national identity (see above).

23.2.5 *Economic Hardship*

There is no policy by which Tunisian consulates ought to provide financial help to nationals abroad in case of economic hardship or homelessness. Consulates do not provide in-kind benefits, such as access to material goods or services. More specifically, none of the institutions - whether the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its Office for Tunisians Abroad or social service offices in consulates and embassies - provide any sort of help (administrative or financial) for Tunisians abroad in case of hardship. Similarly, these Tunisian institutions do not offer any help to Tunisian nationals abroad with regard to accessing benefits and services related to minimum income resources in the host country either.

23.3 Conclusions

This chapter has shown that, in line with the well-established perception of the Tunisian diaspora that historically perceived itself as being instrumentalised by the homeland, Tunisian authorities traditionally perceived citizens abroad as an instrument for economic development, while aiming to foster linkages with this population by promoting cultural ties with emigrants and their descendants.

Since 2011 and the regime change, a new priority has emerged among Tunisian migrants who have fought to be recognized as full members of their homeland's polity. In this regard, citizens from abroad obtained the right to vote in parliamentary elections from overseas, with a specific parliamentary representation that few sending states have given to their diaspora (Lafleur 2013).

While the government has integrated its emigrant population into the political process since 2011, this has not translated in significant policy changes to the benefit of the diaspora in recent years. Policies still focus on first Tunisians migrant workers generation and their descendants and recent emigrants that have different characteristics than the old guest workers continue to be largely ignored by their homeland. For these reasons, Tunisian nationals abroad organize themselves informally as an emigrant lobby: their messages flow through Facebook pages, websites, associations, etc., spreading information, developing solidarity and enabling mobilization.

In spite of these limitations, the 2011 revolution re-awakened a deep-seated interest in Tunisian politics among those politically active Tunisians abroad, reinvigorating a long-distance sense of patriotism and untethering a process of "diaspora return". Coming from Europe and beyond, these returnees settled at the core of the state, becoming involved in political parties and civil society or reintegrating into social life. Their multiple belongings, their complex relation with their country of "origin", their "return" that does not entail entirely "leaving" their former country, and their ability to speak different languages, all challenge the traditional approach of Tunisian authorities that perceive Tunisians abroad in monocultural terms. For this reason, it is not unlikely that this population will affect the shape and content of Tunisia's diaspora policies in the coming years.

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