

Dr Alina E Dolea and Adina Maglan – Written Evidence (VUC0071)

1. Diaspora communities in the UK are bespoke targets of cross-border hostile interference & disinformation

Yet they are a missing target group in the current strategies of societal and institutional resilience which focus on state institutions, organizational resilience, or wider society. Diasporas are heterogeneous, distinct and complex communities in the UK that need tailored approaches: due to their transnational and digital existence, they are targeted by hostile information activities and disinformation that crosses borders, aimed to catch them in a web of mixed local, national, and global narratives; they are also disengaged and difficult to reach by governments, authorities, and civil society organisations¹.

Diaspora members experience multiple belongings, loyalties and identities that are constantly negotiated between homeland and Britain as host country; they carry an invisible luggage of their displacement² that impacts on their perceived sense of split existence. Their emotions of migration³ play out in their everyday life in Britain: fear, shame, the need for validation and appreciation, being out-of-place, lonely, sometimes abandoned or rejected by both countries, and the constant need for roots can make members of diasporas *vulnerable*⁴.

- When amplified and exploited by a range of actors, these emotions can contribute to the marginalisation and isolation of diaspora communities, increasing their susceptibility to disinformation, propaganda, extremism, and far-right ideologies, as well as to exploitation networks, modern slavery, and human trafficking.
- Particularly influential are nostalgic narratives of a romanticised past, anti-Western and anti-establishment discourses that offer a sense of justice, belonging, and purpose within imagined communities seeking to exacerbate nationalist homeland loyalties or dissatisfaction with host country and challenge the status quo⁵.

¹ Dolea, A.E., Maglan, A., Trandafoiu, R., Comper, M., Burcu, O., Irimie, C., Toma, T., Gonczol, R., Bica, M.C., Cront, B., 2026. The Romanian Diaspora's Contributions to the British Economy and Society. Policy Report. Bournemouth University. Available from: <https://www.acord.uk/>

² Dolea, A. 2023. The invisible luggage of the displaced: emotions, trauma and public diplomacy. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 19:242–247. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-022-00285-z>

³ Dolea, A. 2024. Diaspora Diplomacy, Emotions, and Disruption: A Conceptual and Analytical Framework. *CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy* Figueroa Press Los Angeles. [Diaspora Diplomacy, Emotions, and Disruption_6.19.24.pdf \(uscpublicdiplomacy.org\)](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-022-00285-z);

⁴ Dolea, A. 2022. Transnational diaspora diplomacy, emotions and COVID-19: The Romanian diaspora in the UK. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 18: 12–14. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-021-00243-1>

⁵ Arkılıç, A. (2022). Diaspora diplomacy: The politics of Turkish emigration to Europe. Manchester University Press; Koinova, M. 2009. Diasporas and democratization in the post-communist world. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 42 (1): 41–64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2009.02.001>; Gherghina, S. & Mişcoiu, S. 2022. Faith in a New Party: The Involvement of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the 2020 Election Campaign.

- Language proficiency, digital and media literacy, educational attainment, and religious beliefs and values further shape these dynamics.

The psychology of diasporas and their emotions of migration are as significant as the demographic and statistical profiles used to describe migrant and diaspora populations. Because nations are dynamic and contested rather than fixed entities, cultural tensions and political struggles originating in countries of origin often extend and manifest into host societies.

- There is a pressing need to better understand these social, cultural, and psychological processes within diaspora communities in Britain.
- Diaspora organisations can act as cultural mediators, mediate these processes and can also develop bespoke cultural resources to promote better engagement between displaced groups, local authorities and healthcare professionals⁶.

2. Diasporas' understanding of democratic systems and trust in institutions differ between the UK and home countries

Increased participation does not guarantee a safeguard against threats to democracy. Diaspora members fulfil multiple civic roles by participating in democratic life in the UK (yet more action is needed toward closing the representation gap⁷), their home countries, and other political structures such as the European Union.

There are significant voting systems differences impacting diaspora voting in both the UK and their home elections. Some countries have automatic voter registration while others, similarly to the UK, ask citizens to register in order to vote. Other countries allow their diasporas to vote from abroad for local, regional or national elections in their home countries, while some others don't.

Cultural and historical legacies have had a lasting impact on levels of institutional trust, social cohesion and civic participation⁸ and influence perception and engagement. For example, door-to-door canvassing may be

Politics, Religion & Ideology 23 (2): 226–42. doi:10.1080/21567689.2022.2080669; Trandafoiu, R 2013, *Diaspora Online: Identity Politics and Romanian Migrants*. New York: Berghahn Books. <https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/TrandafoiuDiaspora>.

⁶ International Development Committee. The FCDO's Approach to Displaced People, Sixth Report of Session 2024–25 HC 525 [The FCDO's Approach to Displaced People](#) quoting [Dolea, A.E.](#), 2025. Written evidence submitted to the International Development Committee's call for evidence into The FCDO approach to displaced people (ADP0016) committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/138050/html/

⁷ Tross, D., and Maglan, A. 2025. *Migrant Representation in UK Local Government Workforces: Advancing Justice and Participation for Equitable Governance*. Research Report. London: Social Equity Centre CIC. https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/647b6afcebf1c6171b9ecb99/6824e64014d7c3bbc7bab38c_Migrant%20Representation%20in%20UK%20Local%20Government%20Workforces-Report-May%2025-single%20page-v3.pdf

⁸ Dolea, A.E., Maglan, A., Trandafoiu, R., Comper, M., Burcu, O., Irimie, C., Toma, T., Gonczol, R., Bica, M.C., Cront, B., 2026. *The Romanian Diaspora's Contributions to the British Economy and Society*. Policy Report. Bournemouth University. Available from: <https://www.acord.uk/>

received with suspicion as this is not common practice in many countries. This creates a significant caveat for democratic participation⁹. Voluntary sector organisations play a crucial role in enhancing diaspora democratic participation. They host polling stations, support diaspora members with voter registration, and act as cultural and system navigators.

The poli-crisis context of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, and the geo-political context in Europe pose an additional threat to UK's constitutional safeguards. For example, the pandemic constituted a fertile ground for exploiting vulnerabilities in relation to public health interventions, with diaspora communities especially exposed to disinformation and misinformation in both native language and English; conspiracy theories and anti-vaccines attitudes have since spread widely in Britain with some communities experiencing lowest rates of vaccination¹⁰.

3. The invisibility of diasporas in policy making

Lack of visibility weakens safeguards in the UK through limited understanding of diasporas' demographic make-up, disproportionality of interventions as well as representation, and undermining trust with local stakeholders.

For example, in the case of the Romanian communities, the 2021 Census recorded 557,554 Romanian-born residents in the UK, which is likely an underestimate, since Home Office data showed over 1.3 million applications from Romanians have been granted a form of status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS)¹¹.

- This ambiguity and invisibility in data of several hundreds of thousands of Romanians impacts resource allocation at local, regional and national level and programme development for civic and democratic engagement at a time of essential need to strengthen democratic values in both Britain, as well as Romania on the Eastern flank of NATO.

Legal safeguards such as the Equality Act 2010 disregard *migration* as a protected characteristic. While this is in principle encompassed as a protected identity under race, White Diasporas lived experiences are defined by ambiguous identities – as White Other or simply Other – which render them invisible to policy makers. Their racialisation can occur through being or sounding foreign

⁹ Maglan, A. 2026. Democratic and Political Participation. In Dolea, A.E., Maglan, A., Trandafoiu, R., Comper, M., Burcu, O., Irimie, C., Toma, T., Gonczol, R., Bica, M.C., Cront, B., 2026. The Romanian Diaspora's Contributions to the British Economy and Society. Policy Report. Bournemouth University. Available from: <https://www.acord.uk/>

¹⁰ Maglan, A., Karim, R., Chang-Edwards, L., Nguekam, G., Manole, A., 2026. First Romanian Health Multi-Stakeholder Roundtable (24 November 2025): Event Report. online: Bournemouth University. Available from: <https://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/41690/>

¹¹ Dolea, A.E., Maglan, A., Trandafoiu, R., Comper, M., Burcu, O., Irimie, C., Toma, T., Gonczol, R., Bica, M.C., Cront, B., 2026. The Romanian Diaspora's Contributions to the British Economy and Society. Policy Report. Bournemouth University. Available from: <https://www.acord.uk/>

(*accentism*), thus they consider the protections of the Act are not applicable to them¹².

Recommendations:

Potential threats to the constitution can be mitigated by:

1. **The production by democratic safeguards of accessible, values-driven resources that reflect diaspora communities' cultures and diversity to encourage their meaningful engagement in democratic processes.** For example, given the Roma's European socio-economic context, human rights concerns and the confusion regarding the Roma versus the Romanian community, it is important to understand the specific identity and issues that may impact on the life of Romanian Roma in the UK¹³.
2. Building intercultural competences amongst those responsible for upholding constitutional protections;
3. **Capacity-building for psychological and cognitive resilience of diaspora communities in the UK¹⁴.** Diaspora organisations and peer networks can be instrumental in developing culturally informed approaches to support the national resilience efforts. Specific actions can include: (A) the development a disinformation toolkit, in partnership with these diaspora organizations in the UK with a special emphasis on cultural aspects; (B) trainings to build and strengthen the resilience of diaspora organizations, with a focus on their leaders as micro-influencers within their online and offline communities.

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¹² Tross, D., and Maglan, A. 2025. Migrant Representation in UK Local Government Workforces: Advancing Justice and Participation for Equitable Governance. Research Report. London: Social Equity Centre CIC. https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/647b6afcebf1c6171b9ecb99/6824e64014d7c3bbc7bab38c_Migrant%20Representation%20in%20UK%20Local%20Government%20Workforces-Report-May%2025-single%20page-v3.pdf

¹³ Bica, M. C. 2026. The Roma Communities and Ethnic Diversity in the UK. In Dolea, A.E., Maglan, A., Trandafoiu, R., Comper, M., Burcu, O., Irimie, C., Toma, T., Gonczol, R., Bica, M.C., Cront, B., 2026. The Romanian Diaspora's Contributions to the British Economy and Society. Policy Report. Bournemouth University. Available from: <https://www.acord.uk/>

¹⁴ Dolea, A.E., 2026. Written evidence submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee's call for evidence into *Soft power: a strategy for UK success?* on March 3, 2025. London, UK: UK Parliament. <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/138492/html/>