UZBEK COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS IN GERMANY: SOCIAL INTEGRATION, CULTURAL CONTINUITY AND THE ROLE OF THE "VATANDOSHLAR" PUBLIC FOUNDATION

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Abstract: Educational mobility, labour migration, scientific cooperation and family reunification have contributed to the gradual formation of an Uzbek community in Germany. Uzbek community councils, registered associations and informal cultural groups provide social networks for migrants and help preserve language, traditions and connections with Uzbekistan. This paper examines the functions of Uzbek community associations in Germany using information published by the "Vatandoshlar" Public Foundation. The Foundation's official database lists several organizations operating in Germany, including Sharqona e.V., Nihol e.V., Davra e.V., Anor Uzbek-German Cultural Centre, O'zbegoyim Women's Community and Iftihor e.V. Their activities demonstrate that Uzbek associations increasingly combine cultural preservation with social integration, educational cooperation, youth engagement and women's professional development. The paper argues that stronger coordination, transparent governance, professional advisory services and cooperation with German institutions can transform these associations into sustainable bridges between the Uzbek diaspora, German society and Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Uzbek diaspora, Germany, community associations, integration, cultural identity, women's organizations, Vatandoshlar Public Foundation.

Germany has become an important destination for Uzbek students, researchers, vocational trainees, medical specialists, engineers, entrepreneurs and skilled workers. Some arrive for temporary education or employment, while others establish long-term family and professional lives.

Migration creates both opportunities and challenges. Newcomers must adapt to an unfamiliar legal and administrative environment, acquire German-language skills and develop new social networks. At the same time, families may wish to preserve the Uzbek language, traditions and emotional connection with their historical homeland.

Community associations can help address these needs. In the German legal and social context, many migrant organizations are registered as *eingetragener Verein*, abbreviated as e.V. These associations operate voluntarily and organize cultural, educational, social and professional activities.

The terms "community council" and "community association" are sometimes used interchangeably in discussions about diaspora organizations. However, they are not always identical. A community council usually performs a representative or consultative function, whereas a registered association carries out specific projects under its charter. In the German Uzbek community, most publicly documented organizations operate as associations rather than as a single centralized council.

The "Vatandoshlar" Public Foundation was established under Resolution No. PQ-5220 of the President of Uzbekistan dated 11 August 2021. Its main purpose is to unite compatriots abroad around their historical homeland, preserve national identity and support the associations created by compatriots.

The Foundation's official priorities include cooperation with public associations abroad, protection of compatriots' rights, preservation of Uzbek language and culture, promotion of

Uzbekistan's scientific and spiritual heritage, support for people in difficult circumstances, and development of cooperation in migration and education.

These priorities provide an institutional framework for cooperation between Uzbekistan and its diaspora. The Foundation does not replace German government bodies or local associations. Rather, it can provide informational, cultural and organizational support and connect diaspora initiatives with institutions in Uzbekistan.

Its official database identifies six Uzbek community organizations in Germany: Sharqona e.V., Nihol e.V. Uzbek-German Scientific and Cultural Society, Davra e.V., Anor Uzbek-German Cultural Centre, O'zbegoyim Women's Community and Iftihor e.V.

The existence of organizations with different goals indicates that the Uzbek community in Germany is becoming more institutionally diverse.

Nihol e.V. Uzbek-German Scientific and Cultural Society was founded in 2015. According to information published by the "Vatandoshlar" Public Foundation, its objectives include preserving and promoting Uzbek culture, language and traditions, uniting compatriots and strengthening scientific and cultural relations between Uzbekistan and Germany. It also organizes academic and cultural meetings and supports compatriots socially.

Nihol's activities illustrate how diaspora organizations can combine cultural preservation with academic cooperation. Such an association may organize lectures, literary evenings, scientific conferences and meetings with specialists.

Davra e.V., officially described as the German-Uzbek Cultural and Sports Society, was founded in 2013. Its objectives include promoting Uzbek culture and language, increasing the social participation of compatriots, strengthening cultural and scientific relations and encouraging healthy lifestyles through sport. The organization also identifies cooperation with German public organizations and support for integration as important tasks.

The combination of culture and sport is particularly useful for working with young people. Sports competitions provide informal environments in which participants can build friendships and improve communication across ethnic and linguistic boundaries.

The Anor Uzbek-German Cultural Centre was established in August 2025. Its declared objectives include preserving Uzbek traditions, uniting compatriots, developing educational and social relations, and increasing young people's interest in their mother tongue and cultural heritage. The organization also seeks to support the adaptation of Uzbeks living in Germany.

These examples show that Uzbek associations do not perform identical functions. Some focus primarily on academic and cultural relations, while others combine culture with sport, youth activities or social adaptation.

Women's organizations constitute an important element of the Uzbek community network in Germany. The "Vatandoshlar" Public Foundation's database includes Sharqona e.V. and the O'zbegoyim Women's Community.

Sharqona e.V. was established in March 2022. Its objectives include bringing together Uzbek women living in Germany, preserving national traditions, facilitating the exchange of experience and supporting women's personal and professional development. The organization also plans cultural events, seminars, networking activities and informational assistance for newly arrived compatriots.

O'zbegoyim Women's Community was established in 2025. Its activities focus on bringing Uzbek women together, encouraging professional networking, preserving national values and supporting women's social integration in Germany.

Such organizations can help women develop professional contacts and overcome social isolation. They may also provide spaces for discussing education, childcare, employment and adaptation to German society.

However, women's organizations should not be limited to family and cultural matters. Uzbek women in Germany are also researchers, students, doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs and specialists in other fields. Professional mentorship and leadership programmes can therefore become important areas of activity.

Iftihor e.V., established in May 2025, focuses on preserving Uzbek culture, uniting compatriots, promoting integration and strengthening cooperation between Uzbekistan and Germany. The organization also identifies the support of young people and families as one of its priorities.

Youth engagement is essential for the future of diaspora associations. Young Uzbeks growing up in Germany may have identities influenced by both Uzbek and German cultures. They may speak German more confidently than Uzbek and may understand cultural traditions differently from their parents.

Community associations should provide opportunities for young people to design projects rather than treating them only as audiences. Youth committees, debate clubs, volunteer programmes, digital media projects and internship networks could increase their participation.

Weekend Uzbek-language classes can also support cultural continuity. Nevertheless, teaching methods should be adapted to bilingual children. Traditional memorization-based approaches may be less effective than interactive activities, theatre, reading clubs and digital resources.

Social integration also requires cooperation outside the Uzbek community. Partnerships with German schools, universities, municipal integration councils and youth organizations can prevent diaspora activities from becoming isolated.

National holidays and cultural celebrations are among the most visible activities of diaspora organizations. These events preserve traditions and provide opportunities for people living in different German regions to meet.

According to the "Vatandoshlar" Public Foundation, Navruz celebrations were organized in Leverkusen and Hannover in 2026. Approximately 400 compatriots and students participated. The programmes included national games, music, dance, traditional customs and Uzbek cuisine. The Foundation described these events as important for strengthening solidarity and transmitting national values to younger generations.

This example demonstrates that cultural activities have several simultaneous functions. They provide emotional connections with Uzbekistan, strengthen communication among migrants and introduce Uzbek traditions to German audiences. Cultural programmes should nevertheless go beyond symbolic representation. Uzbek culture should not be presented only through food, clothing and folklore. Contemporary literature, cinema, science, entrepreneurship and technological development should also be included. The Foundation can support German Uzbek associations in several practical areas. First, it can provide educational materials and assist Uzbek-language programmes. Its official activities already include digital resources and platforms for learning Uzbek. Second, it can help associations exchange successful practices. An organization experienced in women's networking could share its methods with newer associations, while scientific societies could support student and researcher networks. Third, the Foundation can facilitate cultural exchanges, conferences and visits between Uzbekistan and Germany. It can also encourage cooperation between diaspora specialists and Uzbek universities, cultural institutions and business organizations.

In April 2024, a delegation associated with the Foundation met Uzbeks living and studying in different regions of Germany. The programme included meetings and an intellectual competition in Berlin. The delegation also met representatives of the "70 Uzbek-German" society, which had been established in Munich in 2023 to unite Uzbek families and preserve cultural values among children.

Such initiatives indicate that direct meetings can strengthen relationships between associations and the historical homeland. However, cooperation must be based on transparency and respect for the

independence of voluntary organizations. Despite positive developments, several challenges remain. The first is fragmentation. Associations operate in different cities and may have limited information about each other's programmes.

The second challenge is dependence on volunteers. Many leaders combine community work with employment and family responsibilities. Without stable organizational systems, activities may decline when individual founders become unavailable.

The third issue is the quality of information provided to migrants. Residence permits, employment law and qualification recognition are complex subjects. Associations should refer people to qualified German institutions rather than provide unofficial legal interpretations.

The fourth challenge is representation. A single association cannot claim to represent all Uzbeks in Germany. The community includes students, permanent residents, temporary workers, professionals, families and people with different languages and social backgrounds.

Finally, financial accountability is essential. Associations receiving membership fees, donations or project funding should publish clear reports on income and expenditure.

A coordination platform should be established to connect Uzbek associations across Germany without limiting their independence. It could maintain a shared calendar, exchange educational materials and organize annual consultations. Associations should develop clear statutes, regular elections and transparent financial reporting. Leadership positions should be open to young people and women. Professional advisory partnerships should be created with German migration centres, universities and employment institutions. This would allow community organizations to provide reliable referral services.

A digital database of Uzbek specialists, researchers and students in Germany could promote mentorship and academic cooperation. Participation should be voluntary and comply with data-protection rules.

Finally, community associations should cooperate in research. Surveys could identify the educational, linguistic and professional needs of Uzbeks in Germany and help organizations develop evidence-based programmes.

Uzbek community associations in Germany play an increasingly important role in cultural preservation, social networking and migrant integration. Their diversity demonstrates that the community is developing more specialized forms of organization.

The activities of Nihol, Davra, Sharqona, Anor, O‘zbegoyim and Iftihor show that diaspora organizations can support scientific cooperation, sport, women's development, youth engagement and family adaptation. The "Vatandoshlar" Public Foundation provides an institutional connection between these organizations and Uzbekistan. Its contribution can be particularly valuable in education, cultural exchange, information sharing and the promotion of joint projects. The long-term success of Uzbek associations will depend on transparent governance, professional cooperation and openness to German society. By preserving cultural identity while encouraging active civic participation, these organizations can serve as bridges between Uzbekistan and Germany.

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