

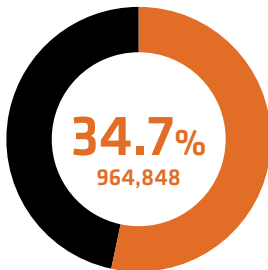


Diaspora engagement mapping ARMENIA

Facts & figures

Emigration¹

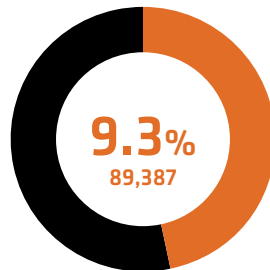
% of emigrants in total population



♂ 53.6%
♀ 46.4%



% of which in the EU



♂ 46.9%
♀ 53.1%



Remittances as a share of GDP: 10.8%
Remittances inflow (USD million): 1,327



Top countries of destination

Russia	527,163
USA	101,757
Ukraine	47,780
Germany	21,263



Political rights



Dual citizenship²



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad³



Terminology: The terms 'diaspora' and 'diaspora members' are not defined by Armenia's national law. However, the Armenian term «ազգությամբ հայեր» is used by lawmakers. This term has different translations in English in the legal acts such as: Armenians by national origin, Armenians by nationality, ethnic Armenians, Armenian origin, Armenian ethnicity.⁴

1 It is important to mention that numbers on emigration and diaspora vary greatly in Armenia due to its long diaspora history. According to the literature, interviews conducted by the researcher, as well as the Armenian government, the total size of the diaspora is close to 7 million with approximately 1.5 million in the EU. The main countries of destination of the diaspora are also different from the top countries of destination of migrants: Russia approx. 2.5 million, France 600.000, Ukraine 400.000, Georgia 250.000, Spain 80.000, Germany 60.000. H. Hakobyan (2017) „Armenian Diaspora in a Changing World“ Yerevan, pages 325-328. [Հակոբյան Հ. Հ., Հայկական սփյուռքը հարավփոփոխ աշխարհում: Եր.: Հեղ. Հրատ., 2017, էջ 31, 325-328]; Armenian Government, 2017 Program of the Government of Armenia, <https://www.gov.am/files/docs/2219.pdf>

2 Article 13.1 of the Law on the Citizenship of the Republic of Armenia <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/51b770884.pdf>

3 The Election Code of the Republic of Armenia stipulated: Armenian citizens residing abroad do not have right to vote in the national elections, available in Armenian at: <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=105967>

4 Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (Art. 47) is available at: <https://www.president.am/en/constitution-2015/> Law of the Republic of Armenia on Foreigners (Art. 9, 15, 16, 18) is available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4ec2c.html> Law on Citizenship (Art. 1, 10, 12.1, 13) is available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/51b770884.pdf>

Armenia does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

The government has been working on a diaspora engagement policy for years but because of internal politics, it has not yet materialised. Diaspora affairs in Armenia is politicized and a high priority of the state. Diaspora issues are also a substantial instrument of the country's foreign and domestic agenda. **Art 19 of the Constitution of Armenia**⁵ entitled "Ties with the Armenian Diaspora" states that Armenia shall, together with the Armenian Diaspora, implement a policy targeted at the development of comprehensive ties and preservation of the Armenian identity and promote repatriation.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2002** ● **Regulation of Overseas Employment (draft)** has been pending adoption at the Armenian Parliament since 2002 because national authorities do not want to be perceived as encouraging emigration⁶. The governmental bodies have not agreed on how the process of the overseas employment has to be licenced and managed in the country.
- 2019** ● **Government Decision No 65-A**⁷ defined priorities, measures and responsibilities of the Governmental Programme in order to achieve a comprehensive cooperation between Armenia and diaspora. According to the Programme, the national government is in charge of creating and developing pan-Armenian networks in the scientific, professional, educational and cultural, economic and other fields; building sustainable relations between Armenian diaspora communities and Armenia; adopting and implementing measures and programmes for deepening and expanding Armenia-Diaspora cooperation; considering and promoting repatriation as a priority; strengthening pan-Armenian national, spiritual, scientific and educational, cultural and other institutions and their role in the resolution of pan-Armenian issues; and supporting the establishment of the organisations representing the Diaspora.
- 2019** ▼
2023 ● **Action Program** foresees the creation and adoption of the Law on Repatriation by the Government in 2020. The law aims to regulate the legal framework of the repatriation process in order to preserve a comprehensive tie with the Armenian Diaspora, promote repatriation, consolidate Armenians in the Homeland, and improve the demographic situation in Armenia. At the time of writing, the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Diaspora, Sport and Youth, had begun to work on the Law on Repatriation with the High Commissioner Office but there is currently no official draft version of the law available.



Trends:

Overall trend: Armenia has a very rich history of diaspora engagement. Although it is a relatively small country, its diaspora is estimated to be two times bigger than the population of the country. The Armenian diaspora has traditionally been quite active in engaging with the country. There are plenty of diaspora organisations around the world, many of whom now have their own branches in Yerevan or other Armenian cities. Unlike other Former Soviet Union countries, Armenia has a common understanding that the diaspora has a huge potential and brings social and financial capital to its homeland. The Armenian diaspora is the largest investor⁸ and seen as the country's biggest hope for positive demographic development.

5 <https://www.president.am/en/constitution-2015/>

6 Bournazian, V. & Harutyunyan, K. (2012): Perspectives on Legal Aspects of Labour Migration. Governance in Armenia. CARIM-East AS 2012/07 Available at <http://www.carim-east.eu/media/CARIM-East-AS2012-07.pdf>

7 The Government Decision No 65-A dated the 8 February 2019 "On the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Armenia" <https://www.gov.am/files/docs/3562.pdf>

8 ASUE (2015): Investments of Diaspora into the RA Economy: Development Prospects <https://asue.am/en/amberd/research/diasporas-investments-armenian-economy-development>



Achievements:

Diaspora engagement: Participation of Diaspora Armenians in Armenia's programmes on social, political, scientific, educational and cultural affairs are a priority to Armenia. Since 1999, the state of Armenia has held six Pan-Armenian Forums.

Repatriation: Armenia has a huge interest in supporting diaspora Armenians in obtaining dual citizenship and in adopting laws on repatriation. Repatriation rhetoric is that "Every Armenian should want to be inspired to connect his identity with the homeland and the *Armeniancy*".⁹

In 2020, the Pan-Armenian Forum will focus on "Diaspora and Repatriation". It will provide an opportunity to study and compare repatriation programmes from other countries including their impact.

Financial and social capital: The Armenia 2020 and subsequent Armenia 2030 Initiative¹⁰ were launched by prominent diaspora Armenians to identify development prospects for Armenia. These exercises led to strategic priorities for Armenia, both inside and outside the country. Armenia 2030 focuses on strategic analysis of long-term growth opportunities for Armenia and Armenians.

Obstacles



- **Lack of policy framework:** In order to build mutual trust and insure that diaspora investments and contributions are being well spent and have a positive impact on the country there is a need to fight corruption and setting up mechanisms of mutual accountability.
- **Overlapping mandates and competencies:** Diaspora organisations and state actors often have competing interests and/or overlapping mandates.
- **Insufficient information and trust measures:** The state still lacks knowledge on "what potentials the diaspora has in each specific country and what the estimated influence is. The system [of state-diaspora relation] is not sufficiently organized".¹¹ Consequently, the diaspora mobilization remains below its potential. Furthermore, the level of mutual trust is quite low.¹²
- **Lack of policy framework and information to support repatriation:** The various government agencies provide select information on their webpages. However, there is no one unified platform summarising and providing detailed information in an easily understandable manner. Mechanisms and programmes supporting business relocation are also needed. Potential repatriates often hesitate because of the risk of losing their overseas business and the uncertainties surrounding starting a new business in Armenia.
- **Language knowledge:** Repatriates and their family members, school-aged children in particular, often find it difficult to follow the school curriculum because of a lack of knowledge of the Armenian language.

9 Armenian press (2019): Strong Armenia-Strong Diaspora. The High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs sums up the year. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1000508/>

10 <https://www.idea.am/armenia-2020>

11 <https://www.tert.am/en/news/2019/02/12/nikol-pashinyan/2919488>

12 Page 6., <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/301351468206660466/pdf/393810AMODiasporas0contribution01PUBLIC1.pdf>

SPOTLIGHT: effective and innovative practices



Covid-19 response

HEALTHCARE

During the Covid-19 outbreak¹³, Armenia engaged its diaspora to assist in the fight against the virus. The Office of Diaspora Affairs played a key role in bridging the needs of the Ministry of Health and the support that Diaspora health care professionals could provide, online or on the ground. Diaspora health care professionals' skills and knowledge have been used to collectively manage the pandemic with national authorities.

Neruzh programme

ENTREPRENEUSHIP

The Republic of Armenia in close cooperation with the Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST) runs the Neruzh programme¹⁴ for young entrepreneurs of Armenian descent who wish to bring their start-up ideas and projects to Armenia. Armenians aged 18-35 who have lived in Armenia for a maximum of 6 are eligible to apply. At least one (co)founder should be of Armenian descent. The target sectors of the programme will be agriculture, tourism and innovative technologies.

In December 2019, the Neruzh programme hosted 80 individuals representing 47 start-ups from 17 countries around the world. Six start-ups received government grants of between \$ 15,000 - \$30,000.

LEAD-Armenia project

INVESTMENT

The Republic of Armenia in close cooperation with ICMPD will launch the LEAD-Armenia project in summer 2020. The project aims to increase the number of migration-related investments, encourage businesses and create jobs in Armenia. It will develop diverse and innovative diaspora investment instruments as a future investment scheme for Armenian banks and other financial institutions and raise awareness on investment opportunities among Armenian migrant communities.¹⁵

Step Home

YOUTH

This programme is organised for diaspora youth by the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs. The aim is to make it possible for Armenian youth living abroad to recognise their homeland and its linguistic and cultural values, and thus contribute to the strengthening of Armenia-Diaspora ties and the preservation of the Armenian identity in the Diaspora. In 2018, 400 Armenian youth from 24 countries participated in the Step Home programme; in 2019, 357 youth participants from 28 countries took part.¹⁶

iGorts Program

SKILLS TRANSFER

The iGorts Program was launched in September 2020 and is a Fellowship which allows for Armenian professionals from around the world to serve in the Government of Armenia. The programme aims at improving and developing Armenian public institutions as well as to promote professional repatriation. Diaspora

13 <https://www.evnreport.com/readers-forum/armenia-combats-the-coronavirus-state-capacity-and-the-diaspora>

14 <http://neruzh.am/en>

15 ICMPD. LEAD-Armenia Concept

16 An interview the High Commissioner Zareh Sinanyan to Armenpress news agency. Available at: <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1000508.html>

professionals are placed in state agencies across different sectors and during 12 months work on different projects, offer their knowledge of international best practices and offer advice as to how to improve the government systems.¹⁷

Young Leaders Training Programme

The programme aims at promoting community leadership, community organisation and cohesion. In 2019, 24 young community workers from six countries participated in the project.¹⁸

A pilot sub-project organising internships for young specialists from the diaspora will be launched on 1 July 2020, running for at least 12 months. The Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs funds the programme.¹⁹ It aims to invest the experience and knowledge of the diaspora experts in Armenia's development process, promoting Armenia-Diaspora partnership and contributing to 'reverse brain drain'.

YOUTH

Repatriation Support Programme

The programme will start in 2020 and will tackle the country's demographic challenges by encouraging the repatriation and return of compatriots living in the diaspora. The programme consists of the following components:

- Providing information and logistical support for repatriates and their family members;
- Language courses for repatriates and their family members;
- Housing assistance and mortgage lending rates for repatriates and their family members through the introduction of appropriate legal, financial and organisational programmes administrated by the State;
- Small and Medium Business Grants (1 + 1)²⁰ to enable repatriates to invest their financial resources in Armenia and implement their business ideas, thereby contributing to the country's economic development as well as to improving the demographic situation.

RETURN

Global Armenian Summit 2022

Organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, the first Global Armenian Summit served as a new format and a dynamic platform for discussing challenges and problems of universal importance for representatives of the diaspora and local partners. The summit aims to provide Armenia and the Diaspora the opportunity to identify priorities, define new approaches to common pan-Armenian agenda and develop a strategic roadmap for future cooperation. The proposals, solutions, and results achieved at the summit will serve as the cornerstone for developing the Armenia-Diaspora strategy.

NETWORKING

17 <http://diaspora.gov.am/en/programs/25/fellowship>

18 An interview the High Commissioner Zareh Sinanyan to Armenpress news agency. Available at: <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1000508.html?>

19 Diaspora-Armenian specialists can participate in Armenia's governance: new project coming soon" available at: <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1001611.html?>

20 For each euro invested, a euro is given by the state

Annex:

List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Prime Minister's Office of the Republic of Armenia <https://www.gov.am/en/staff-structure/>

The PM's office aims to reaffirm pan-Armenity as a priority of the Republic of Armenia and reflecting the new policy pursued by the Government of the Republic of Armenia in the context of Armenia-Diaspora relations.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia <https://www.mfa.am/en/mission>

The ministry plays a key role in maintaining relations with Armenians living abroad and strengthening co-operation with friendly and partner countries.

Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Diaspora, Youth and Sport

<http://www.parliament.am/committees.php?do=show&ID=111201&lang=eng>

Based at the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, the committee activities centre on science, education, culture, repatriation, relations with the diaspora, youth, sports, information, press, radio, television and laws governing those areas.

- At sub-ministerial level

Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs

<https://www.gov.am/en/diaspora-affairs/> <https://www.e-gov.am/decrees/item/20354/>

Under the Prime Minister's office, the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs aims at developing, implementing and coordinating the state policy on Armenia-Diaspora partnership development, as well as at strengthening pan-Armenian targeted programmes, and at providing support for repatriation and enhancing Armenia-diaspora cooperation. The Ministry of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia from 2008 performed these functions until its abolishment in June 2019.



Diaspora organisations in Europe



Armenian General Benevolent Union Europe (AGBU Europe) 2009 Europe

Development activities

Established in 2009 in Belgium,²¹ AGBU Europe is the European arm of the international AGBU, the largest non-profit organisation devoted to upholding the Armenian heritage. AGBU Europe coordinates and develops pan-European activities to further the AGBU mission by bringing together, supporting and mobilising the many chapters and members of the organisation in Europe and by helping to develop and fundraise for projects contributing to the socio-economic development of Armenia through educational, cultural and humanitarian programmes.

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation²² 1956 Portugal

Founded by a prominent Armenian diaspora member, Gulbenkian, the foundation was established in 1956 in Lisbon, Portugal. Its main purpose is to improve quality of life through art, charity, science and education, including education grant for Armenian diaspora.

Conseil de Coordination des Organisations Arméniennes de France 2001 France

CCAF²³ was created with the main objective of coordinating intra-community activities to fight the denial of the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkish Government in 1915, to defend the interests of the Armenian community and to represent the collective viewpoint on matters of public policy, while serving as liaison between the community and the State bodies.

²¹ <http://www.agbueurope.eu>

²² <https://gulbenkian.pt/en/>

²³ <http://www.ccaf.info>

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