



Diaspora engagement mapping KAZAKHSTAN

Facts & figures

Terminology: The country's legislation operates with different terms: diaspora, (former) compatriot, ethnic Kazakh, Oralman (replacing by the term Qandash, "blood relative" since 30 April 2020). The term 'diaspora' is defined in the Art.1 para 1 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan concerning languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan as follows: *Diaspora is the part of people (ethnic group), living outside of the country of its historical origin*¹. The term 'former compatriot' means *a person who was born in or acquired citizenship of the Kazakh Socialist Soviet Republic or the Republic of Kazakhstan, and permanently live abroad*² (Art. 1 para 1 of the Law on Population Migration of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

Political rights



Dual citizenship²



Right to vote in national elections
for citizens residing abroad³



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **0.08%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **240.78**

Voting from abroad:

At embassies/consulates⁴



Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from UNDESA (2024) and remittances from the World Bank (2024).

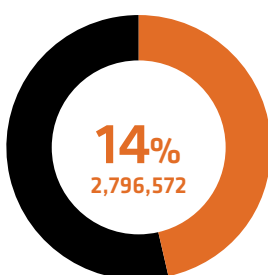
Emigration⁵



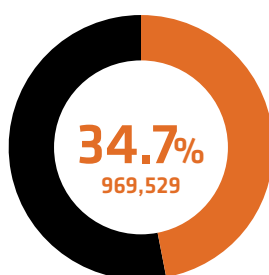
% of emigrants in
total population



% of which
in the EU



♂ 46.4%
♀ 53.6%



♂ 47%
♀ 53%

Top countries of destination



Russian Federation	1,321,004
Germany	896,268
Ukraine	228,982
Türkiye	84,823
Belarus	68,126

1 https://online.zakon.kz/m/Document/?doc_id=1008034

2 Article 3 of the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Kazakhstan determines that "a citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan is not recognized as a citizen of another country", https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=1000816#pos=3;-155

3 Art 24- 8 of the Law on Election of the Republic of Kazakhstan, https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=1004029#pos=622;-18

4 Article 23 (3) the Law on Election of the Republic of Kazakhstan, https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=1004029#pos=585;-63

5 https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/data/UN_MigrantStockByOriginAndDestination_2019.xlsx

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2014** ● **Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan** states that support of the Kazakh diaspora and the Kazakh language is a part of the country's foreign policy.⁶
- 2017** ● **The Concept of Migration Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan** consists of measures intensifying cultural and humanitarian ties with and encouraging the return of ethnic Kazakhs living abroad⁷. These measures include the formation of cultural centres that aim to promote Kazakhstan and inform the Kazakh diaspora about the country's repatriation policy, education scholarships and employment possibilities in Kazakhstan. The Action plan in the framework of the abovementioned Concept promotes Kazakhstan's immigration policy in order to attract foreign investors, businesspersons and high-qualified specialists, including former compatriots.⁸
- 2018** ● **Law on the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan** stipulated that the activity of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan is aimed at "supporting the Kazakh diaspora in preserving and developing native language, culture and national traditions, strengthening its ties with the historical homeland."⁹
- 2018** ● **Action Plan to support ethnic Kazakhs abroad** was adopted by the Head of State to support the implementation of the tasks set at the Fifth World Kurultai of Kazakhs. Among them is the idea of the Otandastar Foundation, which aims to support compatriots living abroad, as well as ethnic Kazakhs who arrived in Kazakhstan. It covers activities in four directions: education support and language preservation; cultural and humanitarian support; information support and communication; intensification of the activity of the World Kazakh Association¹⁰.
- 2020** ● **Law on Population Migration** covers the issue of ethnic return migration and deals with regulating the whole process of repatriation from procedures to obtain the "oralman" status, to measures on adaptation and integration.¹¹ The law was amended to replace "oralman" with "qandas" (meaning 'blood relative,' literally 'blood-fellow,' or 'fellow tribesman') in all legal documents."¹²
- 2023** ● **Migration Policy Concept.** The Concept aims to protect the rights of Kazakh nationals working abroad. For this purpose bilateral agreements will be concluded with the countries with the largest number of Kazakh workers. Diaspora engagement is one of its seven priorities of the Concept.¹³

6 http://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/o-koncepcii-vneshnei-politiki-respubliki-kazahstan-na-2014-2020-gody

7 Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (2016): Press release to the draft Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On concept of migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years 2017-2021", <https://www.enbek.gov.kz/en/node/341772>

8 <https://www.enbek.gov.kz/ru/node/345460>. In English: <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=101042#A51D0DLB8G>

9 https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30352401#pos=2;-155

10 <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1800000280>

11 https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=31038298#pos=3;-155

12 Kazpravda.kz, The term "oralman" has to be legally replaced by the term "qandas" in Kazakhstan [Termin "oralman" zakonodatel'no zamenyat na termin "kandas" v Kazakhstane], available at <https://www.kazpravda.kz/news/obshchestvo/termin-oralman-zakonodatel-no-zamenen-na-termin-kandas-v-kazahstane>, 30 April 2020.

13 Migration Policy Concept 2023-2027 approved by Kazakhstan Government - Official Information Source of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Practices

Explore 520+ practices by country, SDG or sector of engagement in the [interactive database!](#)



The World Kazakh Kurultays and Small Kazakh Kurultays, 1992

Events that aim to unite Kazakh diaspora around the world, to discuss common issues, and to develop strategies for diaspora - Kazakhstan interaction. The last World Kazakh Kurultai (5th edition) was conducted in Nur-Sultan in June 2017 where the Head of State defined the directions of state support of compatriots abroad and underlined the need to rebuild and strengthen relations with Kazakh diaspora. This event led to the establishment of the Otandastar Foundation.¹⁴

Qazaq House, 2019

Launched by the Otandastar Foundation, this Kazakh cultural project consists of two branches: “Abay” Cultural Center and “Atameken” Business House. The Qazaq House organises several events (e.g. training courses and competitions in Kazakh language and Kazakh literature, culture and history; educational camps for children of ethnic Kazakhs; celebration of the Kazakhstan’s state and national holidays).

International Festival of Arts “Saint Qazaq State” 2019

The festival was launched with the participation of compatriots in the frame of the Otandastar Foundation activities. It is dedicated to identifying and supporting talented performers, and popularising traditional types of national culture and art.

Kazakhstan Culture Days

are administrated by the MFA and include different cultural events: exhibitions of Kazakhstani artists, presentations of books in Kazakh languages and/or Kazakhstan’s authors, music, dance and theater performances.¹⁵

‘Kazakh Card’ 2022

The card allows Kazakhs abroad who do not have the citizenship of Kazakhstan to open their own businesses in the country and eliminate visa restrictions on entering and exiting the country. While card holders can get a residence permit in Kazakhstan for up to 10 years, only 100 people will be able to benefit from the application at the first stage.

Kazakh Cultural Center in Brussels, Belgium

Designed primarily to support and engage the Kazakh diaspora in Europe, the centre serves as a dedicated space for diaspora communities to learn and maintain the Kazakh language, reconnect with national traditions and cultural heritage and provide a shared space for interaction, learning and community-building.

¹⁴ <http://www.oq.gov.kz/en/statutory-tasks>

¹⁵ <http://mfa.gov.kz/ru/content-view/v-rossii-prosli-dni-kultury-kazahstana>; <http://mfa.gov.kz/ru/content-view/dni-kultury-kazahstana-v-turkmenistane>; <https://24.kz/ru/news/social/item/202825-dni-kazahstanskoj-kultury-otmetili-v-turtsii>

» Observations

The “Observations” and “Obstacles” sections contain additional information on the context of diaspora engagement that does not fit directly into the other sections. They are based on a combination of literature review and comments from the authors. New information is incorporated during the annual updates. Readers are invited to verify the relevance of the information at the time of reading, as the context may have evolved.

After the dissolution of the USSR, Kazakhstan had neither a government agency nor an official institution dedicated to the diaspora abroad. Nowadays the Kazakh government attempts to institutionalise relationships along two strands: the first part of the policy is aimed at targeting ethnic Kazakhs, so called Qandash (previously Oralmans); the second part of the policy is focused on Kazakhstanis, i.e. those who hold the citizenship of Kazakhstan and reside abroad. Kazakhstan has shown little interest in the recognition of the diaspora’s economic and investment potential.

Modern Kazakhstan has sought to build a state truly of and for the titular ethnicity, in order to overcome issues of Russification of its population. The repatriation programme is one of the main pillars of the migration strategy of Kazakhstan. From 1991, when Kazakhstan gained its independence, to the 1st January 2020, 1,057,280 ethnic Kazakhs or 313,256 Kazakh families, came back to the historical homeland and were granted the status of ethnic Kazakh, so called Qandash (previously Oralman).¹⁶

A main achievement is the introduction of the “Kazakhs card” that is aimed to allow its holder to get a long-term national visa, a work permission and to be engaged in any form of business activities, as well as to receive financial assistance from the state.¹⁷

In June 2019, the Ministry of labour and social protection of the population, the Otandastar foundation and the World Association of Kazakhs signed a Memorandum on mutual cooperation and strengthening of partnerships¹⁸ in order to provide support to ethnic Kazakhs and compatriots living abroad. The Memorandum provides assistance in the development of cultural and humanitarian ties with the Kazakh Diaspora. The State Program for the Development and Functioning of Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011 - 2020 provides a framework of “political, diplomatic, methodological and organizational support for the study of the native language by diaspora.” In addition, within the framework of this program, the Kazakh diaspora is regarded not only as a recipient, but also as a tool to popularize the Kazakh language. In particular, it is supposed to attract representatives of the diaspora who speak the Kazakh language for special Public Relations campaigns.¹⁹

Kazakh diaspora significantly advanced cultural preservation efforts with over 200 diaspora organisations operating across more than 40 countries hosting events to celebrate traditions such as Nauryz, reflecting grassroot movements aimed at strengthening national identity abroad and increasing solidarity with expatriate communities.²⁰

Kazakh diaspora youth are increasingly returning to Kazakhstan for tuition-free education, financial support, and repatriation opportunities. However, they often face Russian-language barriers and socio-cultural marginalisation. In response, many develop hybrid identities, blending their diasporic and ethnic backgrounds as they reintegrate into Kazakh society.²¹

16 zakon.kz (<https://www.zakon.kz/5003829-skolko-oralmanov-pribyli-v-kazakhstan.html>)

17 <https://turanews.kz/en/news/kazakh-card-application-is-launched-in-kazakhstan/>

18 https://www.inform.kz/ru/kazakhstan-budet-podderzhivat-etnicheskih-kazahov-za-rubezhom_a3538040

19 https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=31024348#pos=33;-46

20 <https://astanatimes.com/2024/05/kazakh-diaspora-uniting-across-borders-for-cultural-preservation-and-solidarity>

21 <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=migration&ff1=subEthnic+Groups&id=EJ1387682>

Obstacles



- **Quantifying diaspora** is difficult due to inconsistent definitions, fragmented data, and limited international coordination. Many ethnic Kazakhs abroad aren't captured in official statistics, and categories like returnees or temporary migrants blur boundaries.
- **Institutional issues:** There is a number of state actors involving in shaping and managing diaspora policies of Kazakhstan and overlaps in their powers. As a result, there are a lot of internal issues that hinder policy development and impact. The World Association of Kazakhs and the establishment of the Otandastar Foundation could be seen as efforts towards developing a more effective institutional system and reducing the burden on the government bodies and building more efficient and effective work in this direction.

Annex:

List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 520+ institutions](#)

Diaspora related institutions



- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

President of the Republic of Kazakhstan is in charge of the internal and foreign policy of Kazakhstan. He determines the main strategy for the country's development, including diaspora and migration policies. As an example, the issue on the need for changing the term "oralman" was put forth by the former president Nazarbayev²²

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a key institution in providing assistance to the members of the Kazakh diaspora and in promoting Kazakh language

The Ministry of Culture and Sports leads in the support and development of the Kazakh language and culture. One of its objectives is to follow "the implementation and coordination of activities in the field of international cultural cooperation, development of cultural ties with compatriots."²³

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population is in charge of launching and shaping the state labour migration and repatriation policy

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for providing textbooks and teaching materials in Kazakh languages for compatriots abroad and setting up the quotas for returnees²⁴

The Department for inter-ethnic relation was established in 2016 under the Ministry of Information and Social Development to coordinate interaction with diasporas and organisations of compatriots living abroad. It monitors and analyses the social, economic, and cultural situation of compatriots, ethnic Kazakhs living abroad, etc.

The Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan is engaged in activities of development and preservation of the Kazakh language and culture among the Kazakh diaspora.²⁵

The Unified Contact Center of "Otandastar Foundation" is a key institution dealing with diaspora, compatriots and returnees. It provides compatriots and returnees (oralmans) with information on repatriation, citizenship acquisition procedures, adaptation and integration measures, employment possibilities, etc

The World association of Kazakhs is a nongovernmental organization. Since 1992 it has been responsible for maintaining relations with compatriots living abroad

22 https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/tokaev-nado-otkazatsya-ot-slova-oralman-379519/

23 https://mks.gov.kz/rus/o_ministerstve/polozhenie_o_ministerstve/

24 <https://informburo.kz/novosti/kvotu-na-granty-dlya-oralmanov-v-kazahstane-uvelichili-s-2-do-4.html>

25 https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30352401#pos=2;-155

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Read more about diaspora organisations
in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora
organisation](#)"



Association des Kazakhstanais en France 2010

The aim of the association is to develop friendly and business contacts between members of the association, to participate in the development of economic and cultural cooperation between Kazakhstan and France.

Federation of European Kazakh Associations (FEKA) Europe 2008

FEKA is an independent, non-profit organization that promotes communication between European Kazakh's and Kazakh's in the world and with Kazakhstan. FEKA unites Kazakh association of Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden.

Kazakh House Germany 2009

Kazakh House in Berlin is a centre that aims to develop business and cultural relationships between Kazakhstan and Germany. The following organisations and companies branches are presented at Kazakh House: the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Germany; the Association of Entrepreneurs and Legal Entities "Eurasian Entrepreneurs Association" in Germany; Official dealer of Kazphosphate LLP, among others.

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