



Diaspora engagement mapping Kyrgyzstan

Facts & figures

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections
for citizens residing abroad²



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **20.38%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **2,850**

Voting from abroad³:

At embassies/consulates



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 \(2024\)](#).

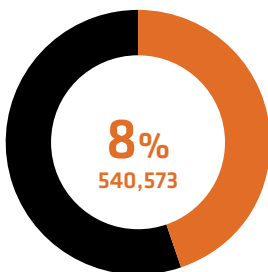
Emigration



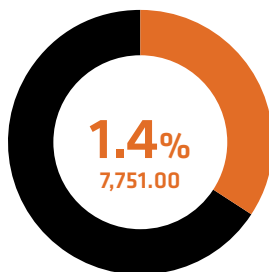
% of emigrants in
total population



% of which
in the EU



♂ 44.9%
♀ 55.1%



♂ 34.3%
♀ 65.7%

Top countries of destination



Russian Federation	333,664
Kazakhstan	100,242
Türkiye	44,361
Ukraine	27,538
Tajikistan	11,382

1 Art 22 of the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan №70 dated 21st May 2007, <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/202103/50?cl=ru-ru&mode=tekst>.

2 Art. 2 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic Nr.68 "On Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic" dated 02 July 2011, <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/203244?cl=ru-ru>

3 Article 2.1 of The Central Election Commission's Ordinance on the Organization of the Participation of Citizens Living Outside the territory of Kyrgyzstan in the Presidential Elections, the Elections of the Jogorku Kenesh Deputies and in National Referendums (Nr.102 dated of 31 July 2015), https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/npacik/Polojeniya_CIK_KRBSHKnyn_Joboloru/POLOJENIE_Ob-10048/

Terminology: Kyrgyz lawmakers use the terms: diaspora, compatriots and ethnic Kyrgyz (Kairylmans).

Despite the widespread use of the word *diaspora* in official documents, this term is not clarified in the legal framework. The State Service of Migration outlines the concept of diaspora in the draft law 'On Fundamentals of State Policy to Support Compatriots Abroad':

- Diaspora means the part of an ethnic group living outside its nation-state (Article 1 of the Draft Law)
- Compatriots are citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic staying outside of the borders of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as citizens of foreign states, who have lost the citizenship of the Kyrgyz Republic or who have left the citizenship of the Kyrgyz Republic in the manner prescribed by law. (Article 1 of the Draft Law).⁴
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan noted that only those Kyrgyz who stay abroad permanently and legally are considered as «compatriots», those staying temporarily are not taken into account. Therefore, it initiated amendments to the relevant law regulating the stay of citizens of Kyrgyzstan abroad.⁵

Kyrgyz lawmakers have created the status “Kairylman” (literally meaning ‘returnee’ in Kyrgyz), which determines temporary legal status until receipt of Kyrgyz citizenship according to Article 1 of the Law (Nr.175 of 26 November 2007) ‘On State Guarantees for Ethnic Kyrgyz Moving to the Kyrgyz Republic.’⁶

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2013** ● **Law On Fundamentals of State Policy to Support Compatriots Abroad [Ob Osnovakh Gosudarstvennoy Politiki Po Podderzhke Sootechestvennikov Za Rubezhom]** was adopted by the Supreme Council with amendments from August 2013.⁷ The law outlines the principles and goals of the state policy towards compatriots abroad and determines the objectives and activities of the state authorities in this field. It stipulates that the Kyrgyz Republic guarantees protection and support for its compatriots abroad. State authorities are obliged to develop and implement measures in accordance with this law.
- 2013** ● **Programme for Promoting Employment and Regulating Internal and External Labour Migration until 2020 [Programma Sodeystviya Zanyatosti Naseleniya I Regulirovaniya Vnutrenney I Vneshney Trudovoy Migratsii do 2020 goda]** was adopted by the government. Governmental Order Nr.485 of 6 September 2013. The programme aims to streamline migration processes and create conditions for the development of internal and external labour migration and increase the competitiveness of the economically active population of Kyrgyzstan. The main priorities of the programme are the protection of the rights of labour migrants abroad, increasing the numbers of professional training opportunities for potential migrants, the creation of working places within the country and reintegration measures targeted towards returned migrants.
- 2017** ● **Programme “Kairylman” [Programma Pravitel'stva Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki “Kairylman” po okazaniyu sodeystviya etnicheskim kyrgyzam, pereselyayushchimsya v Kyrgyzskuyu Respubliku, i kairylmanam na 2017-2022 gody]** aims to assist ethnic Kyrgyz resettlement to the Kyrgyz Republic and Kairylmans (returnees) for 2017-2022; it was adopted by the Government (Governmental Order Nr.518 of 30 September 2016). The programme aims at modernizing the resettlement process of

4 Law 'On Fundamentals of State Policy to Support Compatriots Abroad' see: https://static-2.akipress.org/st_runews/.storage/runews1/files/2016-10-21/c3e72463e2279ef653409548e28b3675.docx

5 https://24.kg/english/227992_Foreign_Ministry_of_Kyrgyzstan_proposes_to_expand_compatriot_notion____/

6 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/202209?cl=ru-ru>

7 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/203992/10?mode=tekst>

ethnic Kyrgyz, simplifying the procedures of citizenship acquisition and strengthening socio-economic measures for returnee integration. In the framework of the Kairylman resettlement program, every Kairylman is eligible for administrative and financial assistance and social and medical support from the government. The programme also includes compensation for transportation costs, a lump sum allowance, housing allowance, vocational trainings and job search assistance. The procedure of obtaining a kairylman status and certificate can be found under the Law No.175 'On State Guarantees for Ethnic Kyrgyz Moving to the Kyrgyz Republic' of November 26, 2007 and Government Ordinance No. 402 'On Approval of the Regulations on the Procedure for Granting a Kairylman Status' of June 23, 2015.

2018 ● **National Development Strategy for 2018-2040 [Natsional'naya Strategiya Razvitiya Na 2018-2040 gody]**, adopted by the President (Presidential Decree Nr.221 of 31 October 2018)⁸. The strategy outlines three possible areas to maximise labour migrants contribution to the country's economic development:

- Training/retraining of labour migrants in order to broaden the geographic spread of labour migration (Over 90% of Kyrgyz migrants work and live in Russia. When Russia's economy faces decline or struggles with the EU/US sanctions, it has an impact on the economy of Kyrgyzstan as well);
- Ensuring protection and support of labour migrants and their families abroad by creating representative offices in the territories of mass resettlement of Kyrgyz labour migrants;
- Improving the investment climate in order to draw the interest of labour migrants to invest in the national economy.

● **Draft Concept of migration policy until 2040 [Ob Utverzhdenii Kontseptsii Migratsionnoy Politiki Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki do 2040 goda]**⁹ stipulates that employment of Kyrgyz nationals abroad is considered "as part of a national development strategy, since it allows taking advantage of global employment and attracting remittance flows."¹⁰ It includes a section on the support of compatriots, including measures aimed at preserving the cultural and historical ties of compatriots with their historic homeland, the development of diasporas in other states, and using their potential as tourists and investors.

2021 ● **Concept of Migration Policy 2021-2030.** The aim is to regularise migration processes through the implementation of state programs that mitigate adverse effects and create the conditions for good migration governance that would benefit migrants and socio-economic development of the Kyrgyz Republic. The main beneficiaries of the Concept and its Action Plan are migrants, especially women, youth and children and migrants' families, as well as Kyrgyz diasporas.

8 <http://www.stat.kg/media/files/aeadc90a-809e-4bc0-81e2-41aa342aa236.docx>

9 <http://ssm.gov.kg/%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%BA%D1%80-%D0%B2-%D1%81%D1%84%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5-%D0%BC%D0%B8%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B8/>

10 Musabaeva, A. (2019): Migration Policy Concepts of Kyrgyzstan: Are They Changing? <https://cabar.asia/en/migration-policy-concepts-of-kyrgyzstan-are-they-changing/>



Practices

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



Mekendeshter

This initiative is under the supervision of the former President of Kyrgyzstan Roza Otunbaeva. It serves as a dialogue platform between government actors and compatriots abroad. It aims to develop a common approach and vision for diaspora-state cooperation. Every two years the Mekendeshter Forum is organized by the foundation Initiative of Roza Otunbaeva with the support of the Government and IOM. The forum's agenda outlines a national strategy for a particular year. Select compatriots living abroad are invited to share their experience and knowledge.

Mekendesh 2017

A compatriot in Russia, Kubanychbek Osmonov, who owns a construction company, My House, in Kyrgyzstan, initiated this project to provide affordable housing for migrants abroad. The company has developed special conditions so that each compatriot working abroad can safely purchase housing in Kyrgyzstan. For the moment, it is the only company that does not require a down payment and repayments can be spread over a long period of time.

Loyalty program for migrants to buy housing 2015

Initiated by the private construction company TS Group in Kyrgyzstan, within this programme, labour migrants abroad can purchase a house without down payment for up to 3 years, without bank commissions, any additional non-refundable transaction costs and/or administrative fees.

Meken-Card 2022

Meken-Card is a state initiative that offers a document confirming the status of a compatriot with foreign citizenship and his or her rights. This card gives its holder equal rights with citizens of Kyrgyzstan to freely enter and leave the country without a visa, to receive educational and medical services, as well as to reside and have the opportunity to work in the Kyrgyz Republic without a residence and work permit.

Capacity development lab: Kurak Voices



Kurak Voices is a partnership project between the Migration and Human Trafficking Council under the Speaker of the Kyrgyz Republic's Parliament (MHTC) and Association DANAHER – Diaspora of Women from Kyrgyzstan in Poland (Danaker), implemented by ICMPD and funded by the European Union. It mobilises the expertise of Kyrgyz diaspora based in Europe to empower local leaders and strengthen communities through inclusive public dialogue in Kyrgyzstan.

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 dissolution of the USSR, Kyrgyzstan had neither a government agency nor an official institution dedicated to the diaspora abroad. Nowadays the government attempts to institutionalize the relationship with its population living and residing abroad by developing policies and programmes aiming to strengthen the financial and social contribution of diaspora and enforcing the repatriation of migrants working abroad. The government worked on Improving and strengthening the potential of Kyrgyz returnees. In this regards, the Ministry of Education and Science provides quotas to ethnic Kyrgyz people to study in Universities of Kyrgyzstan.¹¹

Obstacles



- **Political instability:** Kyrgyzstan’s economy is largely dependent on remittances from its citizens working abroad. However, the political instability in Kyrgyzstan undermines diaspora engagement in terms of programme implementation and trust in their long-term realisation. Whenever the government changes, the national priorities shift as well. There is no guarantee that diaspora engagement will be continued after government changes.
- **Negative perception of returnees** and Kairylmans including resentment or fear are certainly not unique to Kyrgyzstan. Kairylmans, ethnic Kyrgyz, are often seen as the “Other” in Kyrgyzstan.
- **Definitions:** The concept of ‘compatriot’ in the legal framework is confusing. The Kyrgyz State Registration Service assumes that the main criteria for determining ‘compatriot’ is the ethnicity of a person. The Migration State Service defines a ‘compatriot’ as a person who considers Kyrgyzstan as his homeland, regardless of the circumstances. In the current version of the Law ‘On Fundamentals of State Policy to Support Compatriots Abroad’, the term ‘compatriot abroad’ relates to a Kyrgyz citizen living outside the country. As a result, ethnic Kyrgyz and Kyrgyz who changed citizenship are not included under the ‘compatriot’ status. Misconception of the term in the national legal framework create different understandings of diaspora.

11 <https://edu.gov.kg/ru/mezhdunarodnye-programmy/konkurs-dlya-postupleniya-v-vuzy-kr-na-2018-2019-uchebnyj-god-dlya-etnich-eskih-kyrgyzov/>

Annex:

List of Actors

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

Diaspora related institutions

- **National institutions**

President of the Kyrgyz Republic

The head of the country both personifies the unity of the people and the state power and serves as the chairman of the Council for Communications with Compatriots Abroad under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Council for Communications with Compatriots abroad under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic

The council was created in 2018. It is the state consultative body providing strengthening interactions between state bodies and compatriots. It prepares recommendations on support and protection of interests and rights of compatriots abroad.

Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Science, Culture and Health of the Jogorku Kenesh

Established in 2015,¹² the committee suggests and offers the government key directions for the development of new laws or programs in the direction of social affairs, education, science, culture and health for all Kyrgyz nationals with particular attention to Kairylmans and labour migrants working abroad.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Responsible for the external policy of the country and the cooperation between relevant government authorities, alongside with the assistance and support of Kyrgyzstan's citizens abroad, the Ministry is also responsible for maintaining relations with Kyrgyz diasporas abroad.

State Service of Migration

The functions and authorities of the Ministry of Labour Migration and Youth were transferred to the State Service of Migration in 2015. The State Service consists of four main components: development and implementation of migration policy; coordination and monitoring of migration processes; provision of services to the population related to migration in and outside of Kyrgyzstan; support and cooperation with government bodies, diasporas and international organizations.

Kyrgyz Global

The non-commercial organisation unites young Kyrgyz people abroad to present them innovative and professional opportunities and possibilities to be involved in the development of Kyrgyzstan. Their mission is to increase the number of highly qualified specialists from Kyrgyzstan.

¹² <http://www.kenesh.kg/ru/article/show/38/istoriya-kirgizskogo-parlamenta>

Migration and Human Trafficking Council under the Speaker of the Kyrgyz Republic's Parliament (MHTC)

MHTC is an executive body under the Speaker of the Parliament. It was established to strengthen the relationship between the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic and its compatriots living abroad, while also facilitating collaboration with various state bodies within the country. The primary objective of MHTC is to formulate timely recommendations and proposals that support and protect the rights and legitimate interests of Kyrgyz citizens, both abroad and domestically.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

DANAKER Poland

Danaker is the first non-profit diaspora organisation from Kyrgyzstan in Europe, dedicated specifically to empowering Kyrgyz women migrants. The organisation focuses on promoting Kyrgyz culture, supporting migrant integration and empowering women within the diaspora community.

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



KyrgyzClub Germany 2012

This non-profit organization was founded in order to unite Kyrgyz nationals and Kyrgyz compatriots living in Germany and to support Kyrgyzstan after it gained its independence. Nowadays it is a platform for introducing Kyrgyz culture to local society, and supporting Kyrgyz people residing in Germany with integration into the local community.

Kyrgyz in Belgium & Friends 2011

This socio-cultural association of Kyrgyz compatriots in Belgium, works in two main areas. First, they support integration of Kyrgyz compatriots. Second, they introduce Kyrgyz culture to locals through cultural events.

Meken Italy 2012

The association was created by Kyrgyz compatriots in Italy to expand the diaspora network. Nowadays the association provides support for compatriots and does charitable work as well as organising cultural events.

Diaspora Kirgiska

The Kyrgyz Diaspora in Poland is a community organisation dedicated to supporting Kyrgyz nationals and those of Kyrgyz descent living in Poland, offering resources, cultural events and a support network.

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