



Diaspora engagement mapping **BENIN**

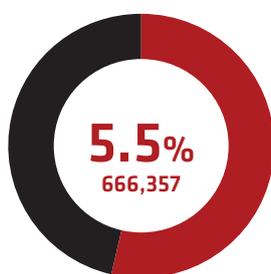
Facts & figures

Emigration

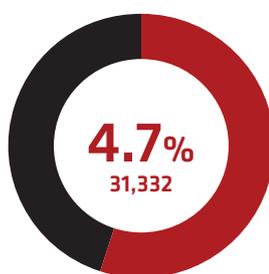
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 53.8%
♀ 46.2%



♂ 55.0%
♀ 45.0%



Remittances as a share of GDP: **3.5%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **396**



Top countries of destination

Nigeria	368,802
Togo	72,092
Côte d'Ivoire	70,144
Gabon	51,809
France	22,477



Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Voting from abroad³:

At voting offices



Terminology: Benin refers to its diaspora as 'Beninese abroad' (Bénois de l'extérieur)

2000 National Policy for Beninese Abroad



Benin's diaspora engagement policy addresses the following aspects of diaspora engagement: security and protection needs, and economic, cultural, educational, economic and political engagement.⁴ A new national migration policy is also being finalised which will address some aspects of diaspora engagement.⁵

1 *Loi portant code de la nationalité dahoméenne. 1965. Cotonou.* <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b581c.html>

2 *Loi portant code électoral. 2019. Cotonou.* <https://www.cena.bj/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/LOI-N%C2%B0-2019-43-PORTANT-CODE-ELECTORAL.pdf>

3 In French, 'bureaux de vote' which are in countries where more than 100 Beninese citizens are registered on the electoral roll. See : Abi, Samir. 2015. *Migration Et Participation Politique Transnationale. La Diaspora Béninoise En Belgique Et Le Droit De Vote À Distance.* Liege: Université de Liège.

4 Agence Nationale des Béninois de l'Extérieur. 2000. "Politique Nationale Pour Les Béninois De L'extérieur". Cotonou: Agence Nationale des Béninois de l'Extérieur

5 Key informant interview, National Agency for Migration and Diaspora, 25 June 2020.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 1990** ● The **Constitution** says in Article 38 that the state shall protect the rights and legitimate interests of Beninese citizens abroad.⁶ The article has been used as a basis for allowing the diaspora to vote in national elections.⁷
- 2014** ● The **Development Pact of Benin with the Diaspora**⁸ serves as a diaspora engagement framework for socio-economic development, with commitments aiming to make the diaspora an active development actor engaged in poverty reduction. It outlines policy priorities including improving state-diaspora dialogue and participation, surveying the diaspora, strengthening diaspora rights, establishing development financing mechanisms, and mobilising diaspora competencies.
- 2016** ● The **Government Action Programme 2016-2021** foresees the signing of a partnership between the government and the diaspora to better take into account diaspora needs in national policies and to promote diaspora investments by introducing tax incentives for specific sectors. The programme also aims to promote diaspora talent in international organisations and in the diplomatic service, including through preferential recruitment as support staff in diplomatic missions.⁹
- 2019** ● The **National Development Plan 2018-2025** recognises the diaspora as a source of development financing, noting its importance to supporting daily household consumption and its potential to contribute to domestic savings. It further states that the government will direct diaspora funds towards productive investments, including through financial products and microfinance.¹⁰



Trends & achievements

Since Benin's transition to democracy in the 1990s, the Beninese abroad have been able to participate in the political life of their country of origin, with their rights to vote and to dual citizenship rarely questioned.

Beninese diaspora engagement gained momentum at the turn of the century, when the government launched a national diaspora policy and empowered the foreign ministry with a diaspora engagement mandate and a diaspora-focused directorate and national agency. Around the same time, the High Council of Beninese Abroad (HCBE) was recognised by the state as a "public utility association", with the aim of bringing together diaspora associations and serving as a conduit between the diaspora and the state.

Benin has continued to signal its intention to encourage the use of diaspora expertise back home and channel more funds towards investment initiatives, including in its latest national development plan. However, plans for a diaspora-orientated reform of the Investment Code and a new partnership between the state and the diaspora (mentioned in the latest Government Action Programme) have yet to materialise.

6 *Constitution De La République Du Bénin. 1990. Cotonou.*

7 ANGOP. 2005. «Présidentielle 2006: La Diaspora Béninoise Autorisée À Voter», 2005. http://m.portalangop.co.ao/angola/fr_fr/mobile/noticias/africa/2005/9/43/Presidentielle-2006-Diaspora-beninoise-autorisee-voter,98bcbc46-f4d8-453a-a17e-a1a22e9a4de0.html?version=mobile.

8 Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, des Béninois de l'Extérieur, de la Francophonie et de l'Intégration Africaine. 2014. «Pacte De Développement Du Bénin Avec La Diaspora». Cotonou: Gouvernement du Bénin. <http://oitfm-benin.org/web/files/BENIN%20DIASPORA%20PACTE%20DE%20DEVELOPPEMENT.pdf>.

9 Présidence de la République du Bénin. 2016. «Programme D'actions Du Gouvernement 2016-2021». Bénin: Présidence de la République du Bénin.

10 Ministère d'État chargé du Plan et du Développement. 2019. « Plan National de Développement 2018-2025». Bénin: Ministère d'État chargé du Plan et du Développement. https://plan.gouv.bj/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/MPD_Plan-National-D%C3%A9veloppement_2018-2025_version-edite-.pdf

In addition, notwithstanding the benefits of Benin's dual citizenship arrangements and diaspora participation in democratic discourse, the resulting "internationalisation" of local politics has been subject to criticism.¹¹ Moreover, political divisions within the diaspora are said to have increased in recent years as domestic politics have become polarised.¹² That said, the government has brought several high-profile diaspora members into senior positions (see below), underscoring its commitment to encouraging diaspora participation in national governance.

Despite implementing relatively few new high-profile diaspora engagement activities, in recent years, the government has taken steps to improve service delivery for the issuance of passports to the Beninese abroad,¹³ while facilitating the travel through the introduction of an e-visa (for non-citizen diaspora), and addressing harassment at the airport.¹⁴

In 2016, the Office of the President established a mechanism to market opportunities to diaspora-owned contracting companies wishing to work on – or co-finance – development projects in Benin, although the results of the programme have not yet been ascertained.¹⁵ In 2019, the Beninese Embassy in France engaged diaspora entrepreneurs in discussions regarding investment opportunities in Benin, with stakeholders agreeing to establish a network of France-based Beninese entrepreneurs and a dialogue framework with the embassy.¹⁶

Obstacles



- **Restructuring of diaspora representation:** In recent years, the High Council of Beninese Abroad has undergone a restructuring process, while dealing with governance issues and member disputes.¹⁷ Some of the HCBE's country sections have been suspended and splinter groups have formed. This has arguably constrained their ability to set the agenda and legitimately speak for the diaspora.¹⁸
- **Challenges surveying the diaspora:** The National Agency for Migration and the Diaspora has said that accurately surveying the diaspora has been a challenge, as Beninese abroad often do not register with authorities unless they have a problem.¹⁹
- **Low diaspora confidence in Beninese governance:** Building diaspora trust has been a persistent challenge for the government, especially with regard to reassuring the diaspora that funds committed to national development will be used appropriately. Low confidence in land and property rights has also constrained diaspora investment.²⁰

11 International Centre for Migration Policy Development. 2020. "Diaspora Engagement On Country Entrepreneurship And Investment: Policy Trends And Notable Practices In The Rabat Process Region". Background Paper. International Centre for Migration Policy Development. <https://www.rabat-process.org/images/RabatProcess/Documents/background-paper-thematic-meeting-bamako-2016-diaspora-engagement-rabat-process.pdf>.

12 Key informant interview, Beninese diaspora member, London, 10 June 2020.

13 Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération. 2018. «Communiqué Du Ministère Béninois Des Affaires Etrangères Et De La Coopération». <https://www.benin-consulat.fr/communique-du-ministere-beninois-des-affaires-etrangeres-et-de-la-cooperation/>.

14 aCotonou.com. 2019. «Nouveau Départ: La Cnddb Évalue Les Chantiers De Talon», 2019. <http://news.acotonou.com/h/116688.html>.

15 Key informant interview, National Agency for Migration and Diaspora, 25 June 2020.

16 Benin24TV. 2019. «Pacte De Développement Avec La Diaspora : Le Réseau Des Entrepreneurs Béninois En France En Gestation», 2019. <https://benin24tv.com/pacte-de-developpement-avec-la-diaspora-le-reseau-des-entrepreneurs-beninois-en-france-en-gestation/>.

17 Key informant interview, Beninese diaspora member, London, 10 June 2020.

18 Ibid.

19 Ribouis, Olivier. 2020. «Diaspora: Rapid «Que Sais-Je ?» Du Mouvement Migratoire Des Béninois». *Banouta*, 2020. <https://www.banouta.info/article/investigation-reportage/20200129-diaspora-rapide-que-sais-mouvement-migratoire-bninois/>.

20 Key informant interview, National Agency for Migration and Diaspora, 25 June 2020.



SPOTLIGHT: Effective practices



Capacity-building activities involving diaspora civil servants²¹

GOVERNANCE

Benin has demonstrated that its diaspora can be engaged to build public sector capacities. In 2018, the National Association of Communes of Benin signed an agreement with the Association of French Elected Officials of Beninese Origin. The partnership, which saw high-level support from the Beninese presidency, will see Beninese-origin elected officials from France work with Beninese mayors to strengthen local governance.

Support to Beninese diaspora entrepreneurs

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The London-based African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) launched its AFFORD Business Centre (ABC) Benin project in February 2020 to enhance the investment potential of the diaspora in the small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector. With support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, ABC Benin will support diaspora-led SMEs, with an outreach campaign planning to mobilise the Beninese diaspora across Europe who wish to invest in Benin.

²¹ Présidence de la République du Bénin. 2018. «Signature De La Convention De Partenariat Entre L'ancb Et Les Élus Français D'origine Béninoise (EFOB)». <https://presidence.bj/actualite/comptes-rendus/104/Signature-de-la-convention-de-partenariat-entre-IANCB-et-les-Elus-Francais-dOrigine-Beninoise-EFOB>.

Annex:

List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU CIDO)

Benin is a member of the African Union and nominates a diaspora focal point to represent Benin as part of the AU CIDO Continental Meetings.

- **National institutions**

National Agency for Migration and the Diaspora

Established in 2000, the agency is under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.²² Its main function is to organise the relationship between the State and nationals abroad, as well as their associations.^{23,24}

Directorate for Consular Affairs and Beninese Abroad

Established in 2001,²⁵ the directorate is under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.²⁶ It is responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring diaspora engagement policies.²⁷

High Council of Beninese Abroad (HCBE)

The HCBE was established in 1997 and recognised by the state as an “association with public utility” in the year 2000. The HCBE aims to regroup nationals abroad to facilitate their participation in national political life, protect their rights and interests, and promote investment in Benin. It also implements cultural, economic and sports exchanges between Benin and migrants’ countries of residence.

In countries of residence, the HCBE is organised into sections (including a community assembly, a community council and a community office) in which members of diaspora associations and nationals registered at consular and diplomatic posts can participate. At central level, the HCBE is composed of a general assembly, a coordination committee, and an executive office.²⁸

22 *Décret Portant Attributions, Organisation Et Fonctionnement Du Ministère Des Affaires Étrangères, De L'intégration Africaine, De La Francophonie Et Des Béninois De L'extérieur*. 2012. Cotonou: Présidence de la République du Bénin.

23 International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the International Organization for Migration. 2015. “A Survey On Migration Policies In West Africa”. Vienna. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/survey_west_africa_en.pdf.

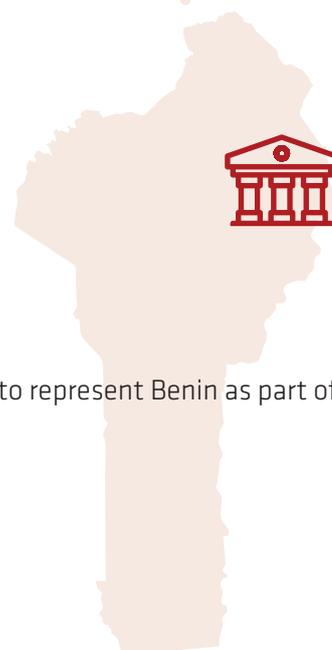
24 «Les Structures Sous-Tutelle | Ministère Des Affaires Étrangères Et De La Coopération De La République Du Bénin». 2020. *Ministère Des Affaires Étrangères Et De La Coopération*. <https://diplomatie.gouv.bj/structures-sous-tutelle/>.

25 International Organization for Migration. 2005. “Results Of The Survey: Engaging Diasporas As Agents Of Development”. Geneva: International Organization for Migration. https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/microsites/IDM/workshops/Mainstreaming_02030205/related%20docs/survey_results.pdf.

26 *Décret Portant Attributions, Organisation Et Fonctionnement Du Ministère Des Affaires Étrangères, De L'intégration Africaine, De La Francophonie Et Des Béninois De L'extérieur*. 2012. Cotonou: Présidence de la République du Bénin.

27 Ibid.

28 International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the International Organization for Migration. 2020. “A Survey On Migration Policies In West Africa”. Vienna. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/survey_west_africa_en.pdf.



Diaspora organisations in Europe



The High Council of Beninese Abroad has representations in many European countries, which aim to bring together smaller associations in the country of residence. In addition, a range of smaller associations is present, particularly across France, which focus on facilitating integration and, to a lesser degree, development activities.

Alliance-Bénin en République tchèque Czech Republic

Integration activities

The Alliance-Bénin brings together the Beninese diaspora in the Czech Republic, including by organising cultural activities.

Association Béninois et amis de Nantes (BAN) France

Development activities

BAN aims to contribute to the cultural life in Nantes and Loire-Atlantique. It provides integration and informational services to the resident Beninese and develops philanthropic projects in Benin, notably in the education, health and social protection sectors.²⁹

Association des Béninois d'Italie à Milan (ABI) Italy

Integration activities

ABI brings together the Beninese diaspora residing in Italy.

Association des Béninois de Montpellier (ABEM) France

Development activities

Integration activities

ABEM promotes Beninese culture, brings together the diaspora and friends of Benin residing in the region, promotes cultural exchange with France, and implements philanthropic projects.³⁰

Association des Béninois et Amis du Bénin aux Pays-Bas (AB & AB) the Netherlands 2000

Integration activities

The AB & AB aims to facilitate the socio-economic and cultural integration of the diaspora in the Netherlands.

29 «Association Béninois Et Amis De Nantes». 2020. *Metropole.Nantes.Fr*. Accessed June 10. <https://metropole.nantes.fr/infonantes/association/22748-association-beninois-et-amis-de-nantes>.

30 «L'annuaire Des Associations». 2020. *Assos.Montpellier.Fr*. Accessed June 10. http://assos.montpellier.fr/TPL_CODE/TPL_ASSOCIATION/PAR_TPL_IDENTIFIANT/987/RETURN/1/2898-annuaire-des-associations.htm.

Association des élus français d'origine béninoise (AEFOB) France 2013

☑ Development activities

AEFOB aims to connect French elected officials of Beninese origin to support development in Benin and share good policy practices, while encouraging dialogue between Beninese institutions and mobilising development resources. In 2018, the AEFOB signed an agreement with the National Association of Communes of Benin, which aims to mobilise Beninese-origin elected officials from France to strengthen local governance in Benin.

Association des Ressortissants Béninois en France (ARBF) France

☑ Development activities

☑ Integration activities

The ARBF aims to defend the interests of its members, organise meetings and debates, and participate in development projects.³¹

Conseil des Béninois de France (CBF) France 1999

☑ Development activities

☑ Integration activities

CBF brings together diaspora associations in France. It aims to represent the Beninese diaspora in France, strengthen solidarity, defend their interests, strengthen Benin-France relations, and contribute to development.³²

Communauté des Béninois de Suisse (CBS) Switzerland 1978

☑ Integration activities

CBS aims to defend the interests of the Beninese diaspora in Switzerland. It has previously organised Beninese-Swiss forums on social dialogue in Benin, for which CBS partnered with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.³³

Fédération des associations des ressortissants béninois en Allemagne (FARBA) Germany

☑ Integration activities

FARBA brings together regional associations in Saarland, Hamburg, Bavaria, Bonn, Berlin and Brandenburg and Saxony.³⁴

31 «Association Des Ressortissants Béninois En France». 2020. *Forum Des Organisations De Solidarité Internationale Issues Des Migrations*. Accessed June 10. <https://forim.net/osim/association-des-ressortissants-beninois-en-france/>.

32 «CBF (Conseil Des Béninois De France) - Coordination SUD». 2020. *Coordination Sud*. Accessed June 10. <https://www.coordinationsud.org/membre/cbf-conseil-des-beninois-de-france/>.

33 «Activités Au Bénin». 2020. *CBS Bénin*. Accessed June 10. <https://www.beninlbs.ch/au-benin.html>.

34 «Ambassade De La République Du Bénin - Communauté Béninoise - Présentation». 2020. *Ambassade-Benin.De*. Accessed June 10. <http://www.ambassade-benin.de/fr/communaute-beninoise/presentation.html>.

High Council of Beninese Abroad (HCBE) – national sections: several countries

- ☑ Development activities
- ☑ Integration activities

The HCBE has local representations in several countries of destination, including France, Germany, Belgium, and the UK. They bring together the diaspora associations in their respective countries, aiming to represent the diaspora, promote solidarity, encourage participation in Benin's development, facilitate integration, and promote bilateral cooperation between Benin and the respective countries of destination.

National sections: France; Germany; UK

Réseau des Femmes Béninoises de Belgique (AsFeBB) Belgium

- ☑ Integration activities

AsFeBB aims to promote the participation of Beninese women in Belgium in all areas, as well as to promote Beninese culture.

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