



# Diaspora engagement mapping SURINAME

## Facts & figures

### Political rights



Dual citizenship<sup>1</sup>



Right to vote in national elections  
for citizens residing abroad<sup>2</sup>



### Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **3.88%**  
Remittances inflow (USD million): **146.89**

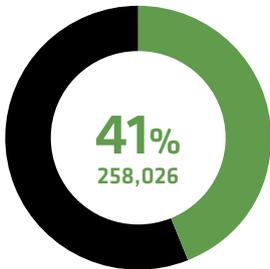
### Emigration



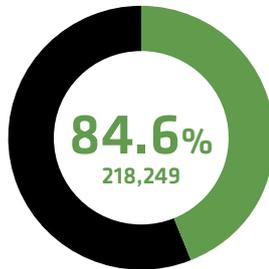
% of emigrants in  
total population



% of which  
in the EU



♂ 44%  
♀ 56%



♂ 43.3%  
♀ 56.7%

### 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](#) (2023).

### Top countries of destination



Netherlands	177,165
France	34,228
French Guiana	28,615
Belgium	6,731
Guyana	4,717

## Diaspora Engagement policy



Diaspora Engagement Policy for Suriname<sup>3</sup> and 5-Year Action Plan (2024 - 2029)<sup>4</sup> Suriname's first Diaspora Engagement Policy aims to harness the potential of diaspora communities as catalysts for national development by establishing an effective and sustainable framework to facilitate meaningful participation, encourage collaboration, and cultivate a sense of shared identity. The policy establishes an institutional diaspora engagement structure, identifying roles of relevant government ministries and departments, diaspora organisations and representatives, IOs, NGOs, the private sector, and other relevant actors. Key areas of diaspora engagement for development addressed by the policy include knowledge exchange and skill transfer, remittances and investments, policy and legislation development, philanthropy and humanitarian aid, and communication and diaspora profiles. The accompanying 5-Year Action Plan has been developed to guide the implementation of the core objectives and streamline coordination among various stakeholders.

1 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b50714.html>

2 Electoral law last amended in 2005: <https://pdba.georgetown.edu/Electoral/Sur/suriname.html>

3 <https://diaspora.sr/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Diaspora-Engagement-Policy.pdf>

4 <https://diaspora.sr/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/5-Year-Action-Plan.pdf>

## Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2014** ● **Persons of Surinamese Descent Act (PSA, *Personen van Surinaamse Afkomst*) – SB 2014 No. 8<sup>5</sup>** defines Surinamese descent to include persons with at least one parent or grandparent born in Suriname and creates the status of PSA beneficiary for all those who do not have Surinamese nationality but are of Surinamese descent. PSA beneficiaries must apply for the status in order to activate it and receive the associated work and residency benefits. This status is not synonymous with dual citizenship.
- 2014** ● **Amendments to the 1975 Law on Surinamese Nationality and Residence (WSI)** facilitate the acquisition of Surinamese nationality and reduce legislative gaps that contribute to statelessness among children of Surinamese descent born abroad. It also confers mothers of Surinamese descent to pass on Surinamese nationality to children born outside Suriname, a right which was previously limited to fathers.<sup>6</sup>
- 2012** ▼  
**2016** ● **National Development Plan<sup>7</sup>** establishes five areas of intervention: good governance, economic diversification, social development, education, and natural resource management. It recognizes the role of the diaspora in the implementation of the plan.
- 2017** ▼  
**2020** ● **National Strategic Plan 2017-2020 (Ontwikkelings Plan 2017-2020)<sup>8</sup>** broadly recognizes that the diaspora presents opportunities for Suriname's long-term development strategy. It mentions the historic relationship with the United States and the Netherlands as well as the diaspora relationship with countries and economies it deems influential such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, China and the African continent.
- 2024** ● **Diaspora Engagement Policy for Suriname<sup>9</sup> and 5-Year Action Plan (2024 - 2029)<sup>10</sup>** Suriname's first Diaspora Engagement Policy aims to harness the potential of diaspora communities as catalysts for national development by establishing an effective and sustainable framework to facilitate meaningful participation, encourage collaboration, and cultivate a sense of shared identity. The policy establishes an institutional diaspora engagement structure, identifying roles of relevant government ministries and departments, diaspora organisations and representatives, IOs, NGOs, the private sector, and other relevant actors. Key areas of diaspora engagement for development addressed by the policy include knowledge exchange and skill transfer, remittances and investments, policy and legislation development, philanthropy and humanitarian aid, and communication and diaspora profiles. The accompanying 5-Year Action Plan has been developed to guide the implementation of the core objectives and streamline coordination among various stakeholders.

### ➤ Trends

In 2010, the government recognized the contribution of the diaspora to national development and that diaspora policy plays an important role within migration policy. By 2012, the government had taken steps towards identifying its diaspora as part of national economic development strategies and setting a baseline for engaging this group. The IOM was central to supporting and guiding these efforts, especially between 2013 and 2017. Accompanied by IOM, the government created the Diaspora Unite Suriname Project, which comprised two main projects to map the diaspora and engage diaspora entrepreneurs in investment.

5 <http://foreignaffairs.gov.sr/consulaire-diensten/personen-van-surinaamse-afkomst-psa/>

6 <http://www.dna.sr/wetgeving/surinaamse-wetten/wijzigingen-na-2005/wet-wijz-surinamerschap-en-het-ingezetenschap/>

7 <https://www.scribd.com/document/311067421/Suriname-National-Development-Plan-2012-2016>

8 <https://www.planningofficesuriname.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/OP-2017-2021-Ontwikkelingsprioriteiten-van-Suriname-1.pdf>

9 <https://diaspora.sr/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Diaspora-Engagement-Policy.pdf>

10 <https://diaspora.sr/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/5-Year-Action-Plan.pdf>

Nevertheless, diaspora policy initiatives have not materialised and it is unclear what initiatives were sustained. In addition, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2017-2021 only refers briefly to the diaspora and does not recognise its importance as part of a migration policy, as the previous NDP did. Collaboration between diaspora groups and the private sector has also emerged as a means of fostering investment and trade and connecting the diaspora with social projects in Suriname, for example the ApuraNetwork crowdfunding project.

Recognising the need for a more structured approach, a significant step was taken in August 2023 with the organisation of the first diaspora seminar, aimed at drafting a diaspora engagement policy.<sup>11</sup> This was followed by a feedback session in October 2023, and the establishment of a Steering Committee to further consider the first diaspora engagement policy and the 5-year action plan.<sup>12</sup> These actions were supported by IOM under the “Promoting an Evidence Based Diaspora Engagement Policy in Suriname” initiative (see ‘Spotlight Initiative’ section). In May 2024, both policy documents were officially published on Diaspora Institute Suriname’s website, marking the country’s pivotal progress in engaging its diaspora.



### Achievements

Legislative framework on nationality: The Surinamese government made strides to reduce gender discrimination in the legislation by granting parents the right to pass on Surinamese nationality to children born abroad. The 2014 amendments to the nationality legislation brought this framework into greater compliance with international standards on discrimination against women and took steps towards reducing statelessness among children born abroad to Surinamese mothers.<sup>13</sup>

The PSA Act formalizes the government’s relationship with the diaspora in certain and specific aspects. Though it does not include dual citizenship,<sup>14</sup> it marks a step forward in the government’s efforts to incorporate the diaspora into the country’s development and nation-building, as presented in the 2012-2016 National Development Plan.<sup>15</sup>

### Obstacles



- **Incomplete legislative efforts on dual citizenship:** Although naturalization legislation has been amended to facilitate the acquisition of Surinamese nationality, current legislation does not allow for dual citizenship among persons of Surinamese descent living abroad.<sup>16</sup> In 2015, the Supreme Court decided in favor of dual citizenship for people of Surinamese decent with Dutch nationality; however, they must have their main residence in Suriname.<sup>17</sup>
- **Regulatory challenges for foreign investment and entrepreneurship:** Foreign nationals seeking to invest or start businesses in Suriname face regulatory challenges that can discourage such actions.<sup>18</sup> The World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Report 2020 ranked Suriname at the bottom of the list of 190 countries in terms of ease of starting a business (rank of 182) and 181 for getting credit.

11 <https://gov.sr/diaspora-engagement-policy-cruciaal-voor-ontwikkeling/#>

12 [https://lac.iom.int/en/news/diaspora-engagement-policy-aims-boost-involvement-surinames-diaspora-national-development?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://lac.iom.int/en/news/diaspora-engagement-policy-aims-boost-involvement-surinames-diaspora-national-development?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

13 <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2014/7/53d20b756/unhcr-applauds-suriname-ensuring-gender-equality-nationality-laws.html>; <https://www.srherald.com/suriname/2014/07/11/leilis-suriname-stimuleert-dubbele-nationaliteit/>

14 <http://foreignaffairs.gov.sr/consulaire-diensten/personen-van-surinaamse-afkomst-psa/voordelen-van-het-psa-document/>

15 [https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/suriname\\_national\\_development\\_plan\\_2012-2016.pdf](https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/suriname_national_development_plan_2012-2016.pdf)

16 [https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/36943/Eudo\\_Cit\\_2015\\_17\\_Suriname.pdf?sequence=1](https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/36943/Eudo_Cit_2015_17_Suriname.pdf?sequence=1)

17 <https://www.navigators.nl/document/id3c15ad42e6694d09b67e8d7af3c996d7/ecli-nl-hr-2015-1749-ecli-nl-phr-2015-402-hr-26-06-2015-nr-1403881>

18 <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/990601467315599193/pdf/105761-REVISED-CDI-Report-FinalLatest-PUBLIC.pdf>



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## SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

### INVESTMENT + ENTREPRENEURSHIP

#### [Suriname Dutch Chamber of Commerce \(Suriname-Nederland Kamer van Koophandel\) 2018<sup>19</sup>](#)

The Suriname-Netherlands Chamber of Commerce was created to foster entrepreneurship and trade between Suriname and the Netherlands. The Chamber is an initiative put forth by the Suriname Embassy and the diaspora organisation SunDeSa. It streamlines and accelerates the process for Dutch investors - many of whom are part of the Surinamese diaspora - to set up a business in Suriname, by addressing weaknesses in these systems that deter investment.

### HUMAN CAPITAL

#### [Diaspora Unite Suriname Project 2013-2017](#)

The Surinamese government partnered with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on two projects that sought to engage the diaspora for economic development under the umbrella Diaspora Unite Suriname Project. According to the sources cited by the IOM, the government received technical assistance for drafting a migration policy, building an official website for the diaspora, conducting surveys to map the diaspora, and implementing a programme to expose foreign entrepreneurs to Suriname's business climate and network.

### PHILANTHROPY

#### [Apura Networks 2003](#)

Apura Networks is a crowdfunding platform that seeks to connect the Surinamese diaspora and other interested professionals and students with enterprises and non-profit initiatives in Suriname. In doing so, it engages the diaspora in Suriname's social, economic, and cultural development and builds networks between the diaspora and Surinamese residents. Recently, the diaspora co-initiated the project [Save Thalia!](#) to renovate a nearly 200 year-old theatre at the heart of Suriname's cultural history.

### SKILLS TRANSFER + CAPACITY BUILDING

#### [Twinning Facility Netherlands-Suriname \(Twinningfaciliteit Suriname-Nederland\) 2008](#)

The Twinning Facility (TW) was created as a mechanism for continuing collaboration between the Netherlands and Suriname when bilateral development cooperation ended in 2010. The TW provides joint financing for partnerships between Dutch and Suriname civil society organizations that bolster Surinamese civil society through knowledge exchange, capacity building, and institutional strengthening.

### POLICY

#### [Promoting an Evidence Based Diaspora Engagement Policy in Suriname 2022-2023](#)

The overall objective of this initiative is to increase the diaspora's commitment and engagement with its country of origin, through the implementation of a government-led gender sensitive diaspora engagement policy. The project will deliver the following outputs: 1) the establishment of a coordination mechanism; 2) the enhancement and revamping of the national Suriname diaspora mapping website; 3) the organization of training workshops to build competencies for policy development and effective migration management; and finally, 4) the development of a draft evidence based national Diaspora Engagement Policy document along with a five-year action plan.

<sup>19</sup> <http://stvs.sr/suriname-nederland-kamer-van-koophandel-opgericht/>

## Annex: List of Actors

### Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

#### **Caribbean Community (CARICOM)** 1973

CARICOM promotes regional integration and functional cooperation among its 15 member states and 5 associate members; it operates as a single, regional market. CARICOM offers the diaspora a more attractive investment environment than national economies and regulatory frameworks. It also allows countries to incentivise domestic enterprises to export outside the CARICOM region.<sup>20</sup>

- **National institutions**

#### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BUZA)** 1975

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs oversees work to establish and maintain relationships with countries and organizations abroad. This includes consular services and involving the diaspora in projects that contribute to Suriname's development.

#### **The Ministry of Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship and Technological Innovation (Ministerie van Economische Zaken, Ondernemerschap en Technologische Innovatie)** 1991

The Ministry of Economic Affairs, Entrepreneurship and Technological Innovation works to promote domestic and foreign trade, including relevant policies. It also addresses commercial policy issues and grants import, export, and foreign exchange licences. It encourages innovative and competitive enterprise and contributes to inclusive private sector development. The ministry was formerly known as the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism until July 2020.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Subdirectorate for Consular Affairs and Personal Traffic (Onderdirectoraat Consulaire Zaken en Personenverkeer)** 2011

The Subdirectorate for Consular Affairs is charged with overseeing the coordination of consular activities, including matters affecting the diaspora's rights, responsibilities, and interests such as PSA card applications.

#### **Subdirectorate for International Development Cooperation and International Trade (Onderdirectoraat Internationale Ontwikkelingssamenwerking)**

This subdirectorate coordinates bilateral and multilateral international development cooperation and works to increase Suriname's participation in international trade. In terms of international development, it oversees the implementation of agreements with partners, such as the Twinning Facility initiative in the Netherlands.

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)



20 <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/990601467315599193/pdf/105761-REVISED-CDI-Report-FinalLatest-PUBLIC.pdf>

21 <http://tradeandindustry.gov.sr/over-ministerie/missie-visie/>

## **Diaspora Institute Suriname (DIS) 2020**

DIS supports Surinamese and foreigners with a Surinamese background who want to contribute to the construction of a prosperous and sustainable Suriname. It is included under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation.

## **Diaspora organisations in Europe**

Surinamese diaspora organisations in Europe are largely concentrated in the Netherlands.

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



## **Diaspora Events Foundation (Stichting Diaspora Events) 2018** Belgium

- ✔ **Development activities**
- ✔ **Integration activities**

The organization works to build solidarity and cultural identity among Surinamese in the Netherlands, Belgium, and other areas where the diaspora resides. It organizes cultural and social events and encourages knowledge transfer about Suriname.

## **Friendship Bands Netherlands (VNS) (Stichting Vriendschapsbanden Nederland Suriname) 2008** Netherlands

- ✔ **Development activities**
- ✔ **Integration activities**

The organization works to build ties between the Netherlands and Suriname and serves as a channel for providing Dutch society with accurate information about cultural, social, and political developments in Suriname. To do so, it organizes cultural activities, workshops, and guides educational trips to Suriname that also support local organizations. [ f ]

## **NAKS Netherlands Foundation (Stichting NAKS Nederland) 2010** Netherlands

- ✔ **Development activities**
- ✔ **Integration activities**

The organization is a subsidiary of NAKS Suriname, which was founded in 1947. It seeks to support the work of its parent organisation, to raise awareness about Afro-Surinamese culture in the Netherlands, and to pass on cultural heritage.

## **Our Suriname Association (Vereniging Ons Suriname) 1919** Netherlands

- ✔ **Participates in Development projects in Suriname**
- ✔ **Participates in Integration projects in the country of establishment**

The organization promotes cultural heritage and awareness of Suriname's history among people of Suriname descent in the Netherlands and Dutch society in general. It organises large-scale events and serves as a platform for the diaspora to remain informed about current events and issues of public debate in Suriname.

## **Stichting Collectief Overzee Suriname** 2011 Netherlands

- ✔ **Development activities**
- ✔ **Integration activities**

This organization aims to promote unity among Surinamese in the Netherlands and develops social, cultural, and humanitarian projects in Suriname and the Netherlands.

## **Suriname Diaspora Association (Surinaams Nederlands Diaspora Associatie, SuNeDA)** Netherlands

- ✔ **Development activities**

The organization carries out cultural activities as well as initiatives that contribute to Suriname's development and build community among the diaspora. These range from fundraisers<sup>22</sup> that support Surinamese non-profits, to activities that engage Surinamese students in the Netherlands in exchanges in Suriname.

## **Surinamese Students Abroad (SSA)** 2012 Netherlands

- ✔ **Development activities**
- ✔ **Integration activities**

The SSA is a student association comprised of Surinamese youth studying in the Netherlands as well as non-Surinamese students with an interest in the country. It organizes activities that build cultural identity and it focuses on Surinamese students' professional development and motivating them to return to Suriname upon completing their studies.

22 <http://www.dwtonline.com/laatste-nieuws/2020/02/12/wan-okasi-schenkt-aangepaste-rolstoel-aan-tienjarige/>

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