

*Learning by doing*

An



series drawing on research and capacity development actions

# **DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Commercial intelligence  
and business opportunities



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# Context

International trade and exports are drivers for national economic growth and expansion of domestic companies. When coupled with appropriate supporting policies, they accelerate progress in achieving the SDGs. Specifically, export is a significant source of income for public and private sectors. It improves productivity, promotes specialisation and generates employment and decent work, particularly for women, who are more likely to have stable wages when a country engages in liberal exportation and international trade. It has the potential to expand women's role in the economy, decrease inequality, and expand women's access to skills and education.



SMEs traditionally rely on national institutions or private organisations to facilitate exports, including trade representatives, trade promotion agencies, chambers of commerce and business associations. Although the diaspora is not a traditional partner, it can provide this support and address challenges to export, thanks to insider advantages in languages, affinities and information.

Through EUDiF's research, dialogue and capacity development activities, we have built theoretical and practical knowledge on the different ways diaspora boost export. In this dossier, we bring theory and practice together, sharing what we have learnt through two of our actions about diaspora roles in catalysing export in Armenia and Lebanon. It is an opportunity to reflect on what we have learned from the different action contexts, processes and results to inform and inspire future policymaking and interventions.

# Key challenges & diaspora roles in export

Export can be a complex endeavour, with a variety of challenges. Diaspora can perform many roles to overcome such challenges and assist businesses in their country of heritage. In particular, supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) exporting to international markets. There are seven roles diaspora are regularly seen to play in supporting export, although more may exist:

## MENTORS - BROKERS - PROMOTERS - INVESTORS - TRADERS - CONSUMERS - LOBBYISTS

When performing each - or a combination - of these roles, diaspora can support SMEs to counter the following recurring challenges...

### CHALLENGES



★ In EUDIF's actions in Armenia and Lebanon, diaspora acted as mentors, brokers and promoters. We explore these cases in the next few pages.

#### Challenge type

- Macro
- Product & company

# Export in action:

## Supporting women entrepreneurs in Armenia through diaspora mentoring



### Summary of the action

EUDiF equipped the Armenian General Benevolent Union Europe with (AGBU) (1) thematic training tools on EU market access to spur the potential of women to trade in international markets (2) diaspora mentoring support to expand the Women Entrepreneurs Program and (3) enhanced skills on mentorship and coaching in business development.

### Strands of work:

Through the support of an extended network of diaspora business mentors (20+) in Europe, EUDiF collaborated with AGBU Europe and AGBU Centre in Armenia to:

1. **Develop a Guidebook** on EU-Armenia trading regulatory and legal framework based on an **assessment of local needs**. AGBU staff also benefited from a **workshop on the guide's further usage**.
2. Strengthen the organisational capacities of AGBU to run **diaspora mentorship programmes** targeting women entrepreneurs<sup>1</sup>.
3. Increase knowledge of AGBU on coaching and mentorship tools through **trainings of trainers and peer exchanges**.

### ...about the action

**Capacity Development Lab**

**Harnessing diaspora expertise for women entrepreneurship in Armenia**

**ACTION BASICS**

**Beneficiary:** AGBU. The Armenian General Benevolent Union Europe (AGBU Europe) is a pan-European diaspora organization devoted to upholding Armenian heritage through educational, cultural, social and humanitarian programs. AGBU is present in 30 countries around the world, including in 14 EU Member States.

**Duration:** 17 months

**Sustainable Development Goals:** 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

**MAIN FEATURES**

**Context & needs:** In Armenia, women face multiple barriers to joining entrepreneurship programs, such as expectations to fulfil domestic roles at home, poor financial independence, and lack of capacity to successfully run a business. However, several organisational challenges still remain, including limited access to knowledge, financial sector expertise, markets and networks, as well as insufficient capacity for innovation. AGBU has requested assistance in addressing these gaps through the input of diaspora mentors, specifically young diaspora professionals with fresh entrepreneurial ideas. They have also requested support to develop their organisational capacity to manage these mentorship relations using the right knowledge, skills and tools for their staff.

**General objective:** The action aims to empower AGBU staff in Europe and Armenia with the knowledge, tools and capacities they need to implement efficient and sustainable diaspora mentorship programmes for local women entrepreneurs in Armenia.

**Objectives:**

- Equip AGBU with thematic training tools on how to access the EU market and spur the potential of women entrepreneurship in Armenia.
- Improve the diaspora mentoring component of AGBU's educational program for women entrepreneurs.
- Enhance the mentorship and coaching capacities of AGBU in terms of business development and extend the reach of AGBU's virtual program to include face-to-face sessions.

Funded by the European Union

Implemented by ICMFD

### ...about Armenia

**Diaspora engagement mapping ARMENIA**

**Facts & figures**

**Emigration<sup>1</sup>**

- % of emigrants in total population: 32.5% (84,048)
- % of which is in the EU: 9.3% (23,307)

**Top countries of destination**

- Russia: 52,263
- USA: 101,292
- Ukraine: 47,280
- Germany: 21,263

**Political rights**

- Dual citizenship<sup>2</sup>: 53.6% (men), 46.4% (women)
- Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad<sup>3</sup>: 45.9% (men), 53.3% (women)

**Remittances as a share of GDP: 10.8%**

**Remittances inflow (USD million): 1,327**

**Terminology:** The terms "diaspora" and "diaspora members" are not defined by Armenia's national law. However, the Armenian term *emigrahayn tsghak* is used by lawmakers. This term has different translations in English by the legal acts: South-Armenians by national origin, Armenians by nationality, ethnic Armenians, Armenian origin, Armenian ethnicity.<sup>4</sup>

1) It is important to mention that numbers on emigration and diaspora size globally in Armenia date to the long diaspora history. According to the historical estimates conducted by the researcher, closest to the national government, the size of the diaspora is close to 1 million with approximately 1.1 million in the EU. The main countries of destination of the diaspora are also different from the countries of destination of migrants: Russia approx. 2.5 million, France 400,000, Ukraine 400,000, Canada 200,000, Spain 80,000, Germany 60,000. In comparison 2015, "Armenian Diaspora in a Changing World" report by: Stefan U. Lindemann 2.1., "Diaspora's Migration: New Realities and Challenges", Topik, Zaria, 2017, pp. 31, 305-306; Armenian Government, 2019 Program of the Government of AR, ethnic: https://www.azatutyan.am/2019/02/

2) Article 10 of the Law on the Citizenship of the Republic of Armenia https://www.refworld.org/docid/3d70818a.pdf

3) The Election Code of the Republic of Armenia regarding Armenian citizens residing abroad do not have their source in the national elections, available in Armenian at: https://www.azatutyan.am/document/view.aspx?docID=10027

4) Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, Art. 41. 1. a) and Art. 42. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3d70818a.pdf

5) Law of the Republic of Armenia on Citizenship, Art. 10. 1. a) and Art. 10. 1. b) and Art. 41. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3d70818a.pdf

6) Law of the Republic of Armenia on Citizenship, Art. 10. 1. a) and Art. 41. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3d70818a.pdf

### What's the score?

Women-led businesses represent only 20% of active enterprises in Armenia. There is a need for a sustained networking and mentorship program as an impactful tool to lead women through a successful business path. In Armenia the AGBU **Women Entrepreneurs Programme** is an established mentoring scheme which through EUDiF support has engaged diaspora mentors, especially women diaspora mentors, to empower women entrepreneurs in Armenia. Mentoring for women by women is proving empowering and inspiring for all participants, mentors and mentees alike.

Women entrepreneurship is an under-exploited source of increased employment, wealth creation, innovation, and overall economic development. Challenges to women entrepreneurship on a global scale include access to finance, socio-cultural factors, lack of entrepreneurial knowledge, and lack of professional networks and services. Women are also reported to be less likely to participate in programmes that target business start-up, expansion and international export.

<sup>1</sup> 60% of the women came from Yerevan and 40% from rural areas.

Read more...

# Export in action:

Developing Lebanon's tech sector through the Lebanese diaspora



**Berytech**  
Foundation

In partnership with  
**AFPI & Berytech**

## Summary of the action

EUDiF empowered a Lebanese association of tech professionals in France (AFPI) with (1) a market entry training programme, and (2) guidelines for a quality label, Cedars Tech, to help Lebanese tech companies export services to France.

## Strands of work:

Through the support of six diaspora professionals and two international experts, AFPI, Berytech<sup>2</sup> and EUDiF worked together to:

1. **Assess learning needs** of Lebanese companies to enter the French market, and **design and test a tailored** training programme: the "French Market Acceleration Programme" (FMAP). Members of AFPI received a **training of trainers** on e-training facilitation.
2. Develop capacities of AFPI to promote their work and services through a **communication strategy**.
3. Create Cedars Tech label guidelines based **on research and peer learning sessions**.

## ...about the action

**Capacity Development Lab**

**Developing Lebanon's tech sector through the Lebanese diaspora**

**ACTION BASICS**

**Beneficiary:** Association France-Libanais des Professionnels de l'Informatique (AFPI) is a not-for-profit diaspora organisation for Lebanese IT professionals in France that provides support to IT professionals in Lebanon and promotes technological exchanges between the two countries.

**Partner:** Berytech Foundation is a Lebanon-based incubator and accelerator that provides support to start-ups through research, incubation, networking, mentoring, funding, access to markets, company hosting and acceleration.

**Duration:** 12 months

**Sustainable Development Goals:** 8, 9, 10, 17

**MAIN FEATURES**

Following the financial and economic crisis in Lebanon in 2019 and 2020, high rates of skilled labour migration, business shutdowns and hyperinflation have made it difficult for businesses to thrive. To counter these effects, the Lebanese diaspora in France aims to support the development of the tech market in Lebanon, a priority sector for the government over the past years.

**Context & needs:** AFPI and Berytech, in partnership with the Chambre de Commerce Libanaise (CCFL) and Smart ESA, launched the Cedars Tech initiative to support Lebanese tech companies that wish to enter the EU market, particularly France. Cedars Tech still aims to establish a framework, platform and network, thus, it requested support (1) to further develop the label, (2) to train Lebanese tech companies to enter the French market, and (3) to promote AFPI's services and the Lebanese tech sector.

**Objectives:**

**General objective:** The action aims to equip the Lebanese diaspora in France with knowledge, skills and tools to support the development of the Lebanese tech sector.

**Specific objectives:**

- Ease the access of Lebanese companies to the French market by building on the diaspora's expertise to tailor a training tool, the "French Market Acceleration Program".
- Strengthen the credibility of the Lebanese tech sector by supporting AFPI in drafting the guidelines for the Cedars Tech label, and
- Develop the capacities of AFPI to promote its services and the Lebanese tech sector locally and internationally.

Funded by the European Union

Implemented by ICMPD

Read more...

## ...about Lebanon

**Diaspora engagement mapping LEBANON**

**Facts & figures**

**Emigration:** 12.5% (344,516) of emigrants in total population; 26.2% (133,025) of which in the EU\*

**Top countries of destination:** Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (150,183), United States of America (127,280), Australia (93,705), Canada (94,516), Germany (73,746)

**Political rights:** Dual citizenship<sup>1</sup>, Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad<sup>2</sup>, Voting from abroad: Online/at embassies or consulates

**Remittances as a share of GDP: 32.9%**; **Remittances inflow (USD billion): 6,298**

Terminology: Lebanon refers to its diaspora as 'the Lebanese Expansion' (Arabic: التوسُّع اللبناني) (number of Lebanese diaspora also equal to total population of Lebanon).

Lebanon does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

1 Although statistics conducted by the Levant Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs indicate that the total number of Lebanese emigrants does not exceed the median range, other data highlighted in the Economic Crisis report (2019) namely, estimate the Lebanese Diaspora as around 10 million emigrants, of which 88% are residing in North America. This largely being a function of the specific definition of what constitutes a member of the 'diaspora'.  
2 Law of 1946, an amendment by Decree No. 10028 of 1962. Legal text unavailable in English, www.legislation.gov.lb/lebanon/EN/1 Lebanese electoral law (2002) Chapter: Election Voting for Lebanese Diaspora. [https://www.legislation.gov.lb/fr/fr/legislation/lebanon/FR/1 Lebanese%20electoral%20law%20\(2002\).pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.lb/fr/fr/legislation/lebanon/FR/1 Lebanese%20electoral%20law%20(2002).pdf)

**FRENCH MARKET ACCELERATION TRAINING MANUAL**

Publication developed under an EUDiF action support to the Association France-Libanais des Professionnels de l'Informatique (AFPI)

Implemented by ICMPD

Berytech Foundation

European Union Global Europe Facility

<sup>2</sup>A local incubator and a partner in this Action.

## *What comes next?*

The two actions have potential for replication on different levels:

- **Geographic:** There is opportunity for AFPI to expand into other markets in Europe, and outside Europe for AGBU, once the pilot activities reach maturity.
- **Range of services:** Both beneficiaries may develop new services such as mentoring for AFPI, and coaching for AGBU.
- **Range of beneficiaries:** The partners could turn their focus on different categories of entrepreneurs and other sectors.

Working on these two actions with the diaspora was mutually beneficial for the beneficiary organisations and for SMEs involved.

AGBU and AFPI developed their capacities in areas such as mentoring, training and communication. They expanded their networks in the country of origin by interacting with local partners and SMEs, and in the country of destination by engaging with peers. Simultaneously, they supported the development of local businesses by pilot testing trainings and opening new networks for them.

# Diaspora as brokers

## Exporting guides and training (AGBU & AFPI)

The AGBU Guidebook and FMAP, both drafted by diaspora professionals, addressed the challenges of **access to information, consumer understanding and destination market distortions**. Each tool details procedures, steps and tips to export to the European market, goods and tech services for AGBU and AFPI respectively. The tools included information on legal and regulatory frameworks, export financing, product viability, doing business across cultures and e-commerce.

For AGBU, the guidebook serves as a standard training tool which has also been incorporated in the [Armenian virtual college](#) platform as resource material for business courses.

As for AFPI, the diaspora organisation now has a training programme that it can use to train SMEs.



“ This guidebook breaks down the basics an entrepreneur needs to know before entering the EU market. With the significant increase in women-owned businesses, it was an achievement for me to be able to share my knowledge and contribute as much as possible to these female entrepreneurs in Armenia.

Tania Eojourian, diaspora business mentor, Guidebook's author

“ It was an amazing journey with EUDiF, the training sessions helped to develop a better and deeper understanding of the French market, opened new opportunities and doors and introduced us to a great team of diaspora coaches and beneficial connections with other business owners

Samer Semaan, participant





# Diaspora as promoters

## Quality label (AFPI)

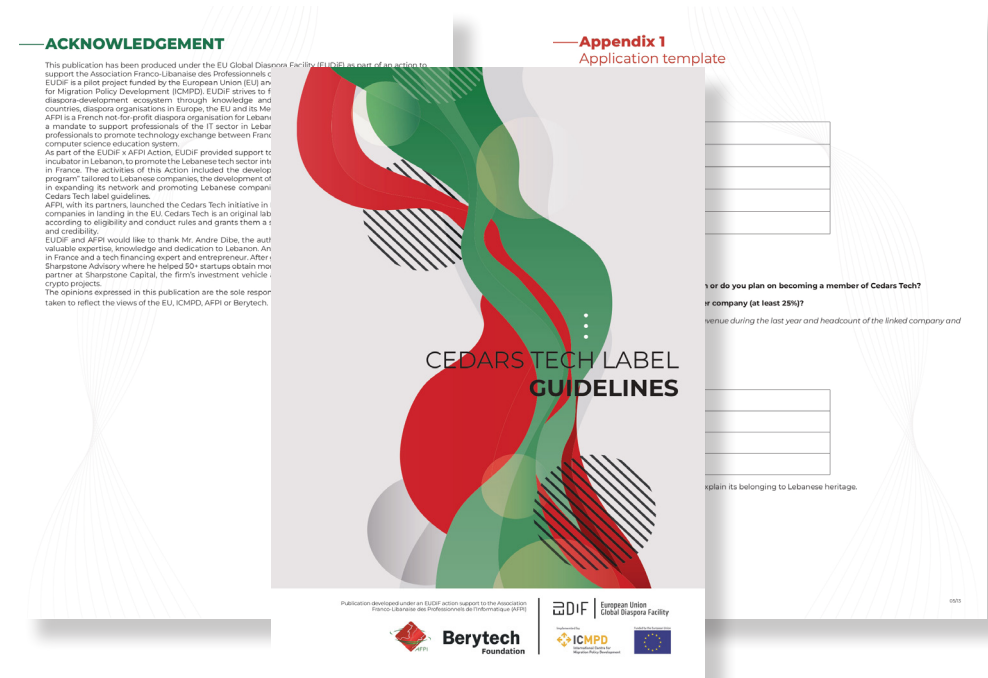
The Cedars Tech quality label is an innovative solution to address **the newcomer image, access to networks and some domestic market challenges**<sup>3</sup>. Cedars Tech is the first diaspora-led tech quality label EUDiF has identified and the first of its kind for the Lebanese tech sector, a priority sector for the country. It aims to increase a product's appeal in a new market. Newcomers exporting under the Cedars Tech label have a seal of approval from a renowned group of tech professionals in the French tech scene.

AFPI and Berytech now have the guidelines for the Cedars Tech label that SMEs can follow in order to apply for the quality label. Once approved, participating SMEs can access services, such as the FMAP and access to AFPI's tech networks in France.

“*The collaboration with EUDiF was really strategic for us to bootstrap Cedars Tech on a solid foundation based on trust, quality and excellence with the Lebanese diaspora and the Lebanese tech ecosystem. Besides bringing capacity building resources by recruiting the best experts in the Lebanese diaspora in Europe, the advantage of working with EUDiF lies in urging us to always focus on the long term sustainability plan instead of a short term project-based focus.*

Charly Bechara, former General Secretary, AFPI

<sup>3</sup> Usually, quality labels are led or supported by the government. AFPI has initiated and advanced this initiative despite a lack of government support.



# Diaspora as mentors

## Structured diaspora business mentorship (AGBU)

The AGBU Programme for Women Entrepreneurs started in 2017 and, as of 2021, piloted the mobilisation of diaspora sectoral expertise as a novel practice with the EUDiF action. Through mentoring workshops, diaspora mentors addressed challenges of **access to information, consumer understanding and distortions in the destination and domestic markets**. They also addressed the increased connectivity and e-commerce trends of the post-pandemic era. The obstacles faced by Armenian women entrepreneurs have worsened due to the combined impact of pandemic and conflict, both of which have disproportionately affected women across the country. In response, with support from EUDiF, AGBU has leveraged its network of diaspora business mentors to upskill 200+ women entrepreneurs through a mentoring programme, helping them to develop new skills and expand their networks in order to develop resilient businesses.

To sustain the inclusion of diaspora in the mentorship programme, AGBU received knowledge resources and practical trainings on how to make mentorship schemes more transparent, measurable and accountable.

“ I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to EUDiF for all the support, flexibility and knowledge transfer provided throughout the implementation of this action. We have numerous examples of the positive impact of diaspora mentorship sessions. Bringing innovative ideas, different perspectives and an “out of the box” thinking mindset, diaspora mentors contributed to the improvement of Women Entrepreneurs’ businesses.

Maria Simonyan, Project Manager, AGBU Europe



## Learn more



### **Future forum human capital conference report (2022)**

The 2022 EUDiF's Future Forum focused on human capital. The session "Diaspora as brokers: business intelligence for domestic SMEs" hosted diaspora organisations, research institutions and business support organisations who shared their experience in the field. Read more on pages 17 and 18 of the report.

### **Collection: Mentoring initiatives (2021)**

Discover 15 Africa-focused mentoring initiatives gathered by EUDiF, ranging from youth mentoring to mentoring diaspora leaders.

### *Trade & SDGs*

### **Trading into sustainable development: trade, market access, and sustainable development goals (2016)**

Learn more from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) about how trade policy, exports and market access conditions can be linked to sustainable development goals.

### **Aid for trade global review (2022)**

This review by the World Trade Organisation highlights future trade priorities, the link between environment, trade and sustainable development, as well as the links between trade and the digital economy and trade and gender.

### *Challenges in trade*

### **Current trade challenges and opportunities**

On this webpage, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) details challenges and opportunities in trade and shares tools to reach objectives in trade policy.

### **Women and Trade: the role of trade in promoting Women's Equality (2020)**

This report of the World Bank sheds light on the impact of trade on women as workers, consumers and family members. It identifies opportunities through which women can gain from trade.

### **Women entrepreneurship study in Armenia (2021)**

This report by the International Finance Cooperation (IFC) reveals patterns, perceptions, opportunities and challenges facing women entrepreneurs in Armenia, including those due to COVID-19.



## *Diaspora & trade*

### **Engaging with diaspora for trade (2022)**

The International Trade Centre (ITC) introduced a course on diaspora for trade. Composed of three lectures, it defines how diaspora can be leveraged for trade.

### **Collection of Diaspora Engagement Practices (2020)**

Diaspora and trading relationships are showcased in this collection of diaspora engagement practices published by ICMPD under the Rabat Process.

### **Creating value through migration (2013)**

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) sets out guidelines to analyse diaspora-related potential in value chains.

The European Union Global Diaspora Facility is the first project funded by the European Union's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) to take a global approach to diaspora engagement for development.


It operates around four strands of work: Knowledge & research; capacity development; dialogue; and promoting diaspora expertise.

EUDiF is implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development; its first phase runs from June 2019 - December 2023.

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