

Learning by doing



series drawing on research and capacity development actions

# SUCCESS FACTORS FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

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# Context

Providing capacity development support to diaspora organisations and public authorities of partner countries is a core service of EUDiF. Between 2021 to 2023, EUDiF has implemented 16 demand-driven actions to equip partners with skills, knowledge and tools. Our actions revolved around three objectives:

- ▶ To help governments create an enabling environment for diaspora engagement;
- ▶ To incubate diaspora-led initiatives and empower diaspora organisations;
- ▶ To facilitate the transfer of diaspora expertise to public authorities.

The ultimate goal was to grow a body of practical insights on diaspora engagement approaches as part of our work to consolidate knowledge of the diaspora-development ecosystem by location and sector. Visit [Our actions](#) to explore the different topics, partners and results.

Through these “learning by doing” reflections, we share lessons learned on current capacity development needs in this diverse ecosystem and success factors to design and deliver impactful interventions. The intention is to offer key pointers for donors, implementing agencies, and partners when contemplating future capacity development efforts.

## Our actions



# Identifying capacity development needs



## Diaspora organisations

Before launching technical assistance interventions, gaining an up-to-date understanding of the key clusters of capacity needs is fundamental. EUDiF facilitated a series of participatory diaspora consultations across Europe gathering 68 diaspora organisations. The consultations resulted in 15 diaspora recommendations which identify capacity development gaps.

Diaspora organisations predominantly require support to professionalise their efforts, this includes organisational development and outreach strategies, as well as to establish partnerships and grow their networks. In addition, diaspora organisations requested training support to boost entrepreneurial skills and foster diaspora investment.



## Partner countries

In complement, we organized a series of regional thematic events and governmental roundtables to take stock of priorities and needs in diaspora engagement across our partner regions (Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and the Pacific). Among the top needs, governments sought technical support in mapping and knowing their diaspora, incentivising youth engagement and identifying possibilities for human capital transfers in various development sectors.



## Shared interests

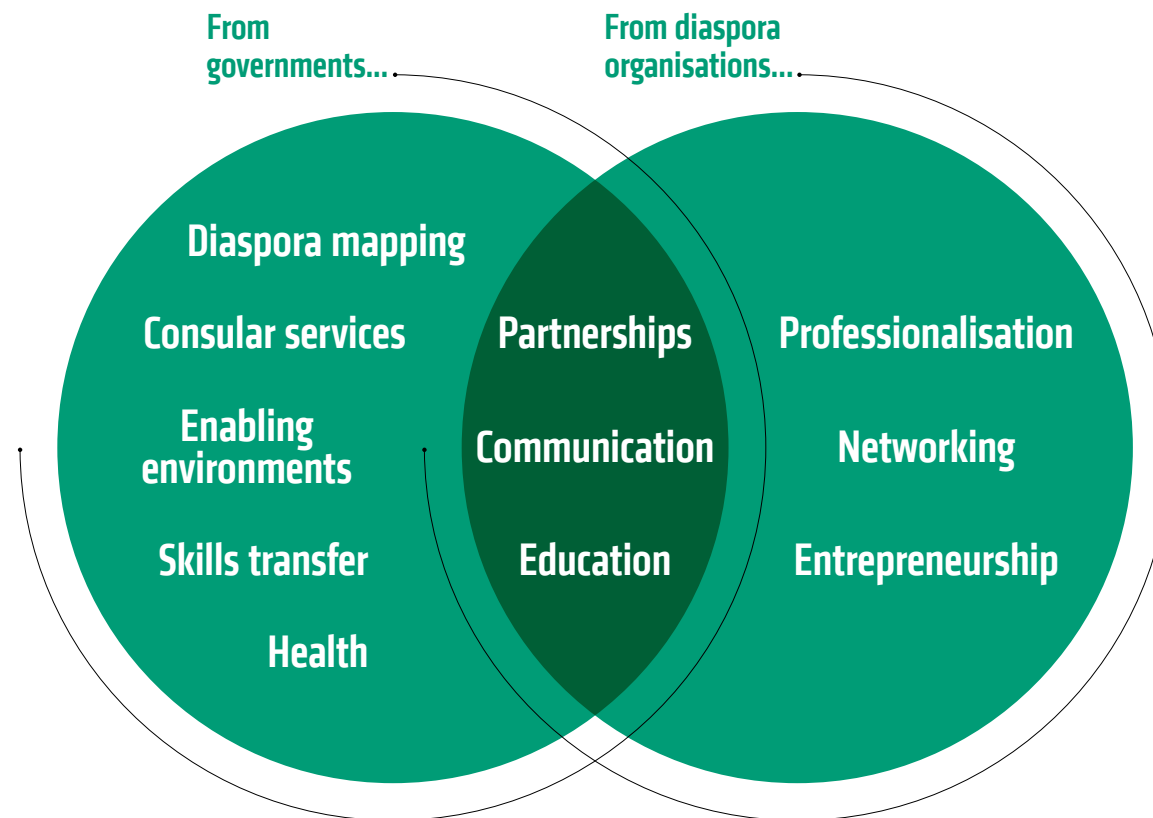
Diaspora actors and governments alike are keen to:

- ▶ Develop enabling environments for diaspora engagement;
- ▶ Foster peer exchanges;
- ▶ Raise awareness about the impact of diaspora work.



# Themes of requests

With the respective priorities of diaspora organisations and government institutions in mind, between 2020 and 2022, EUDiF launched three calls for proposals for capacity development interventions. The following recurrent needs emerged from 130+ applications received:



# Lessons learnt from design and implementation

Whilst implementing our actions, we have been constantly testing and refining our process, and ownership remains the most important element of sustainable interventions. At EUDiF we strive to ensure the ownership of an action is firmly with the applicant from the moment of submission of a proposal throughout implementation and beyond. This principle is guided by two maxims:

- ▶ **Design for sustainability, implement for impact** ▶ 07
- ▶ **Capitalise on the strengths of each stakeholder** ▶ 09



Action preparation is a multifaceted experience that generates full-bodied discussion, articulates innovative ideas and offers space for mutual learning and inspiration for all parties involved.

- Diana Hincu, EUDiF Capacity Development Specialist



## *“Design for sustainability, implement for impact.”*

Looking across our work over the last years, we have acknowledged a few factors we think should be part of any effort in capacity development. These are our eight recommendations for action design and implementation.



### **Build on solid foundations and ensure due diligence**

Following selection, conduct due diligence to ensure the interventions respond to the real demand and prepare the ground for the action to be designed and implemented in full. The preparatory work done at this point is key to identify partner strengths, build rapport and empower the applicant to remain in the main driving seat. Plan significant time for the pre-implementation phase as this requires intensive consultations. Co-design the action with all partners from the start. In projects with a diverse range of partners, early clarification of roles, common goals and exit strategies is essential.



### **Account for current needs and listen**

Set objectives and tailor programmes based on needs assessments to understand local contexts, environments and end-beneficiaries. It is crucial to ensure the intervention reflects current needs and takes into consideration potential risks. Combining capacity development methods and approaches works best.



### **Ensure fluid communication**

Agree on focal points. Sustain continuous and open lines of communication with partners by setting clear monitoring steps. Systematic debriefing, check-ins and feedback loops help build trust and ensure accountability among partners.



### **Strengthen organisational capacities**

Use efficient adult learning methods to maximise partners' organisational potential beyond individuals' capacities. E.g. training of trainers, strategic review, mentoring methods, creating working groups for drafting strategic documents etc. This way, ownership of the results increases among partners. Consequently, they feel more confident to apply the newly acquired skills and to re-create, re-use and scale up the products and tools.



 **Maintain flexibility and pragmatism**

Adapt the timeline, activities and budgets to ensure the intervention remains relevant to stakeholders that are operating in a changing landscape. Flexibility is essential to address operational challenges. E.g. in the process of working with diaspora professionals, keep in mind that they are probably taking this engagement on top of full-time jobs. The timespan of interventions should take this into consideration to run feasible scenarios.

 **Generate knowledge in a participatory manner**

Co-design sustainable outputs with the partners. Make sure that the tools fill knowledge gaps and speak the language of the beneficiaries. Setting objectives jointly ensures the end-product fits the bill. For example, read more about [how we produced a guidebook on exporting to the EU for Armenian women entrepreneurs with expertise from the diaspora](#).

 **Foster peer learning**

Create spaces for learning among peers. Offering proper occasions to compare experience, share lessons and explore replication potential is a mutually beneficial process that works equally for diaspora organisations and government institutions.

 **Design a sustainability strategy**

Think from the beginning how the intervention will be sustainable in the long-run, and capture this in the project documentation. Define what (methods, tools, activities) should be sustained over time, how (handover strategies) and by whom. Please keep in mind that the exit strategy should be progressively rolled out (in several phases with an official handover at the end).





## “Capitalise on the strengths of each stakeholder”

Each capacity development action brings together a specific set of actors. It is fundamental to bring the right actors together and take into account the characteristics of each in order to maximise impact and address any gaps. In our actions, we have sought to amplify and leverage the strengths of each stakeholder.

### Government authorities as enablers



#### Able to drive sectoral initiatives

E.g. A public museum in Moldova committed to promote diaspora heritage in the country and steered the development of heritage tourism strategy for development of the tourist route and the storytelling piloting.

#### Responsible for ensuring the buy-in of national and local stakeholders for better inter-agency coordination

E.g. The Palawan Council for Sustainable Development in the Philippines fostered engagement of local administrations in promoting education on sustainable development with diaspora professionals.

#### Capacity to develop an enabling environment for diaspora engagement

E.g. The Diaspora Directorate in Madagascar took ownership of institutionalising the diaspora skills mapping methodology, which serves as an important tool and prerequisite for diaspora engagement in the country.



## Diaspora organisations as collective change-makers



### Social responsibility that drives the diaspora involvement in the country of heritage

E.g. Red Global MX, the UK chapter of the Mexican Talent Network is working to establish a structured scheme of knowledge transfer between academic diaspora and Mexico, piloting it in climate change and circular economy education.

### Organisational capacity to rally diaspora to participate and contribute to development initiatives on a wider scale

E.g. African Foundation for Development UK (AFFORD) partners with EUDiF to develop diaspora capacity in online crowd-funding and crowd-lending for the benefit of African SMEs.

### Catalysing partnerships, opening doors and access to networks for newcomers due to their insider advantage and connections

E.g. Africa Oracle is a diaspora consultancy organisation which was a key driver in EUDiF's action with Sierra Leone. They are instrumental in building networks and bringing pioneering initiatives and collective work for the local heritage tourism sector in Freetown city.

## Diaspora professionals as cross-cultural experts



### Ability to contribute to innovative projects, despite challenges, being inspired by host countries and international experience

E.g. in Ethiopia, five diaspora professionals are helping the Wollo University to develop its first digital curriculum on agri-food business and innovation technology. The diaspora experts are committed to help the recovery after the warfare in 2021 and to tailor the support to current needs.

### Technical know-how and global mind-set that allow a good understanding of the country of residence, having a track record of successful business there

E.g. Six Lebanese diaspora tech specialists based in France have been pivotal to our intervention in Lebanon. They were able to understand both markets and tailor the products to the needs of the tech industry, a priority sector in Lebanon.

### Advantage of cultural affinities and soft skills, enabling an effective knowledge transfer

E.g. Three Moldovan academia diaspora members are supporting the Diaspora Relations Bureau to establish a thematic network of diaspora in the education sector. They are instrumental in the profiling and piloting phases, making use of their extended networks across Europe. They facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity absorption thanks to their strong connection with local culture and language.

## Specialised partners (international actors, CSOs, thematic consultants, private sector etc.) as informed collaborators and advisors



### Aligned objectives and strong knowledge of regional contexts and niche sectors

E.g. West Africa Heritage Consultancy (WAHC) specialises in heritage tourism with a focus on Sierra Leone and is helping our Action with Freetown City Council in research, data collection and implementation of the Transform Freetown Agenda.

### Liaison and bridge with local stakeholders

E.g. in Armenia, EUDiF benefited from the support of AGBU Yerevan Center to select women entrepreneurs as Programme beneficiaries, identify their specific needs and conduct the match-making with diaspora mentors.

### Connection to relevant experts and networks. Quick response on the ground

E.g. Ashoka plays an important role to support the diaspora organisation Africa 2.0 Spain, bringing expertise in network building and diaspora social entrepreneurship.

## EUDiF as implementing partner and neutral facilitator



### Technical and financial support for partners' projects, providing flexibility and pragmatism at all times

### Extended cross-regional expertise and thematic knowledge. Methodological, strategic and subject-matter guidance to experts and partners

### Catalysed decision-making, especially with regard to the content and overall process

# Our implementation lifecycle

Continuous monitoring of progress by collecting regular  
qualitative and quantitative feedbacks & data

## 1. Pre-implementation phase: planning & design

- Define the general and specific objectives
- Co-design feasible programmes
- Agree clear roles for any partner involved
- Recruit relevant profiles to provide expertise
- Agree sustainability, communication and exit strategies

EUDiF has built an expert roster of over 300 diaspora-engagement experts and diaspora professionals in target development sectors.

## 2. Implementation phase: execution

- Assess the specific needs and tailor the activities
- Conduct activities remotely/on the ground according to the work plan
- Adapt to new needs and changing circumstances to the extent possible
- Reflect and share on the progress
- EUDiF's support to phase down as progress is made as per agreed exit strategy

Did you know that Freetown City Council was inspired to start their own heritage tourism initiative, having read about our work in Moldova?

## 3. Post-implementation phase: evaluating & learning

- Pass the baton
- Evaluate the impact and conduct capitalisation work
- Consider scalability and replicability potential
- Celebrate and share results

Our skills mapping with Madagascar, is feeding into a new project on skills transfer funded by the French Development Agency. It has also inspired Saint Lucia to test the same methodology.



Action preparation and implementation is a complex process in which each step offers an opportunity to ensure the best possible outcome. Success comes from building on existing strengths and reacting to changing needs or opportunities that emerge during implementation. It comes from curating a trusting and open relationship with all involved parties, listening and reacting to feedback, and taking into account differing needs, capacities and interests.

# What our partners say

## Design phase



When the first EUDiF call for requests for support from diaspora professionals was published, I felt that I was personally listened to. The call contained all the right elements, including digitalisation and distance learning, creation of curriculum, and entrepreneurship. These were elements that my fellow diaspora experts and I have considered essential for Wollo University.

- Dr. Ayalew Kassahun, Ethiopian diaspora professional based in the Netherlands, professor in agri-food business

## Implementation phase

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 member of AFPI, Lebanese diaspora organisation



## Post-implementation phase



Proximity, availability and permanent exchanges made this action a success. We liked the fact that we were involved at all levels.

- Jessie Razafison, Director of the Directorate for Diaspora and Migration, Madagascar

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