

Learning by doing



series drawing on research and capacity development actions

EMPOWERING DIASPORA ORGANISATIONS

Professionalisation through governance, leadership and project management

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Table of contents

- 03
Context
- 05
Governance & leadership in action
- 09
Project management in action
- 15
What comes next?
- 16
Learn more



Context

Diaspora organisations (DOs) are increasingly keen to professionalise their operations. Professionalisation is the process through which an organisation implements systems or processes and develops critical skills and knowledge to increase its efficiency and effectiveness. Professionalisation can bring many benefits to a DO including further recognition, access to partnerships, funding and ultimately further impactful change.

At EUDiF, we have observed the appetite of DOs to professionalise during applications for technical assistance via the Capacity Development Lab, as well as in the recommendations resulting from our series of diaspora consultations across Europe. Requests for support for capacity development (CD) for professionalisation made up over one fifth of the applications for technical assistance in 2020-2022, the most requested area of support. These recommendations and requests highlighted recurrent needs in enhancing governance structures, project management, fundraising and network building, amongst other areas.

Through our Capacity Development Lab actions, we have developed a strong understanding of key categories of professionalisation, whilst acknowledging that several other key areas of development (such as knowledge management or communications) are also critical to expand the work and impact of an organisation. Although each is unique, DOs share a common set of areas to consider in the process of professionalisation:

- Governance & leadership
- Project management
- Partnerships
- Membership
- Finance
- Human resources

The subjectivity of professionalisation

Professionalisation is a continuous process that changes as the vision and goals of a diaspora organisation change. It takes careful understanding of a DO's vision and setting its objectives before deciding which processes may benefit from professionalisation - and therefore where capacity development could help. It helps to assess the extent to which a DO should modify, if at all, its structure and way of work.

It is critical to underline that all DOs can deliver services in a professional manner, whether they operate through formal or informal structures, and with different systems and resources. Indeed, DOs working within less formal or ad hoc structures are very common and succeed in implementing impactful initiatives.

Categories in focus



Governance & leadership

Structures and decision-making processes and the ability to set and meet objectives

Good governance ensures the DO stays true to its vision, maintains trust internally and externally and motivates staff and members through sound organisational development. Organisational development has to do with the organisation’s effectiveness and performance. It builds on problem solving skills, leadership, daily management, governance structures, operating procedures, accountability, and control. [▶ Page 05](#)



Project management

Models, tools and knowledge to implement activities

Proper implementation that centres monitoring and learning results in strategies and interventions that are more effective. Areas in project management that often require CD are project design and development, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning. [▶ Page 09](#)



Partnerships

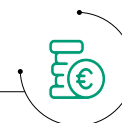
Processes and capacities to network, and build and maintain effective partnerships

Partnerships also feature in our actions. Partnering involves coordination systems and processes to identify and collaborate with other actors. It opens opportunities to access resources and reach wider audiences. Collaborating with EUDiF on an action inherently includes experience of such coordination systems and processes because partnership is at the heart of EUDiF’s actions, research and dialogue.¹ Each action brings together complementary sets of values, competencies and experiences, priorities, resources, and styles of operation and serves as a collaborative exercise to achieve a common vision and goal.



Membership

Approaches to recruit, manage and engage diaspora members and grow valuable connections



Finance

Systems and capacities to secure and manage funding



Human resources

Capacities of the staff and volunteers running the daily operations of the DO and HR processes

¹ Read more about EUDiF’s Future Forum 2023 themed “partnerships”

Governance & leadership in action



Organisational development through peer learning

In partnership with [Africa 2.0 Spain](#) and [Ashoka](#)

Summary of the action:

The action aims to build a community of African diaspora leaders in Spain connected to social entrepreneurs in Africa and Spain.

Strands of work:

The action uses different capacity development methods to develop the organisational capacities of Africa 2.0 Spain to build and manage the community of leaders:

- Conduct a needs assessment through surveys and face-to-face meetings with a diaspora expert from a **peer organisation**².
- Organise training and peer learning sessions to share the realities of a growing organisation.
- Develop an organisational development toolkit for Africa 2.0 Spain.



EUDiF have given us the oxygen that we needed so that we can spread our wings to the other parts of Spain and gain sustainability.

- Grace Obado, Africa 2.0 Spain

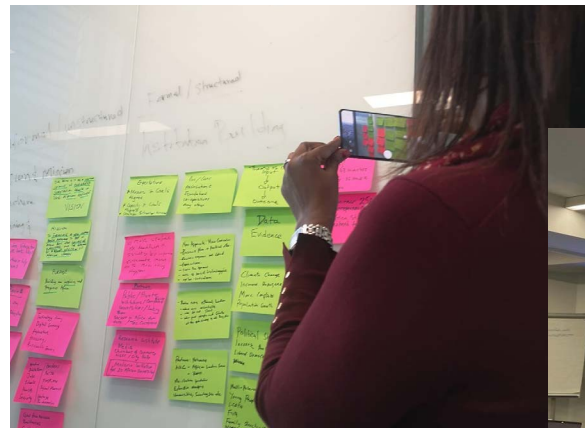


2 From the [African Foundation for Development \(AFFORD\)](#)

Peer exchange pros

EUDiF often employs peer exchange as a capacity development method thanks to the multiple benefits it presents. Peer exchange sessions allow the sharing of **diverse perspectives** that stem from **practical experience** and have **clear applicability**, especially in the case of professionalisation. Shared language and experience of similar challenges mean peer exchange discussions are practical and concrete.

Additionally, participants connect beyond the topics on the agenda. They **network** and sometimes explore **collaboration opportunities**. In our experience, peers often remain in contact long after a specific peer exchange and beyond the end of the action itself.



Governance needs assessment:

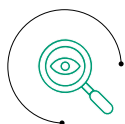
Performing a needs assessment before the start of an activity is a standard practice at EUDiF, as highlighted in the document [“Learning by doing: Success factors for capacity development in diaspora engagement”](#). This approach ensures that the intervention is suitably tailored. The needs assessment under this action sought to collect information through three steps to assess the DO’s governance structures.



■ Step 1: Document verification Legal status, vision and strategic plans



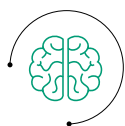
Tip: Collecting these documents serves to gauge the degree of good governance as it can observe whether the documents are properly stored and easily collected, and whether the data is recent.



■ Step 2: Vision identification The areas the DO wishes to work on and the proposed solutions to achieve its vision



Tip: The vision is often mentioned in a DO’s key documents such as vision and mission statements, strategies and annual reports. Assessing its quality and relevance is a key step during a governance review: Is it well-articulated and pragmatic? Does it consistently guide the strategy and operations?



■ Step 3: Self-assessment of capacities Measuring capacities involves [systematically] reflecting on and documenting existing capacities, as well as and needs



Tip: Look for capacities to draft, negotiate and manage contracts, strategic thinking, knowledge of local regulatory frameworks, brand identity development, public relations, and conflict resolution and leadership. Consider participation in previous capacity development exercises.



Organisational development toolkit:

The organisational toolkit developed for Africa 2.0 contains a gradual approach:

1. Audit of internal structures and governance to identify gaps based on the desired mission to achieve.
2. Definition of realistic and achievable goals and objectives using features such as SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, Theory of Change, and PESTE (political, economic, social, technological and environmental) scoping.
3. Action plan, based on the set goals a DO can identify opportunities for intervention and pilot initiatives.
4. Reflection on the quality of the plan and its implementation, and drawing out learning concepts, best practices and knowledge.



Organisational tool application

Concretely, as part of the action plan, the toolkit suggests that Africa 2.0 Spain expands their board according to the legal requirements of Spanish Law.

- ▶ Boards or committees are essential to oversee strategic work.



Tip: a DO should select structures, election process, duties and rotation of terms in a manner that fits its work and DNA. Ideally, board members should work according to Terms of References (ToRs) that define their roles, and should focus more on strategic work rather than operations.

- ▶ Africa 2.0 Spain is also looking at the best type of legal organisation to establish based on the pros and cons of each one (e.g. association, foundation, co-operative).

Project management in action



Developing capacities through cascade knowledge

In partnership with FORIM

Summary of the action:

EUDIIF supports FORIM (Forum des Organisations de Solidarité Internationale issues des Migrations) in strengthening capacities of diaspora networks in France. FORIM manages a unique network whereby certified **diaspora networks** (or *support operators*) support **diaspora organisations** by accompanying project design and implementation in countries of origin, promoting cascade learning. Accompanied DOs can apply for funding under the *PRA/OSIM* (Programme d'Appui aux projets des Organisations de Solidarité Internationale issues de l'Immigration), a FORIM-led programme financed by the AFD (Agence Française de Développement) dedicated to co-funding diaspora-led co-development projects in countries of origin.

Continuous cascades

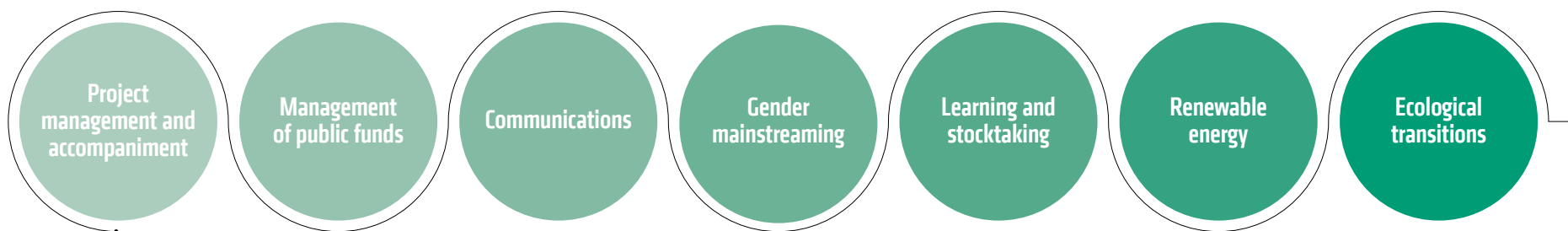
Cascade learning allows the flow of knowledge from one DO to another. As a diaspora group accumulates knowledge in the form of experiences, practices, and lessons learned, FORIM enables capacity development of smaller organisations through the **sharing of this knowledge**.

Beyond cascade learning, FORIM's structure is conducive for **networking, advocacy, visibility and capacity development**, including training sessions and workshops, such as those provided with EUDIIF. **Access to funding** is another major benefit of the FORIM network. The PRA/OSIM and FORIM's other funding windows catalyse and sustain the work of DOs. They enable DOs to put knowledge into practice by funding the operational costs with which to implement programmes.

FORIM is constantly facing and overcoming challenges to manage this diverse network and the cascade of knowledge. Challenges include communication and coordination among diverse groups of people, areas of intervention, priorities and aspirations. Additionally, as a good share of diaspora individuals work on a voluntary or semi-voluntary basis, sustainability and continuity can be an issue. Internal change in an organisation and limited capacities can lead to a high turnover of members, resulting in a disruption in knowledge sharing. Finally, the lack of financial resources continues to be one of the main challenges faced by diaspora organisations.

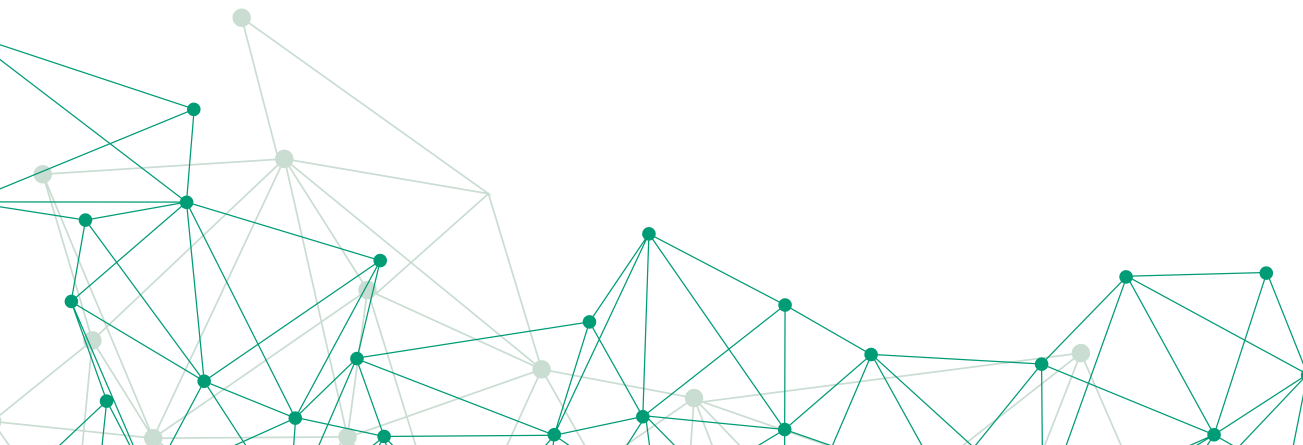
Strands of work:

EUDiF and FORIM coordinated the development of training programmes and their delivery. With the support of experts, we delivered 28 training sessions to support operators who, through cascade learning, can channel the acquired knowledge to diaspora organisations. Based on a needs assessment performed by FORIM, the training topics were on:



For each training topic, we conducted a baseline assessment to gauge members' learning needs and capacities. We subsequently developed training modules and delivered them online and onsite. We followed up with a post-training evaluation, a list of frequently asked questions and training material and recordings available online for all participants and their networks.

 **Read more about the action**



Project management and accompaniment:

The training centred on project management for diaspora-led co-development projects. It provided a systematic approach to build a project plan covering:



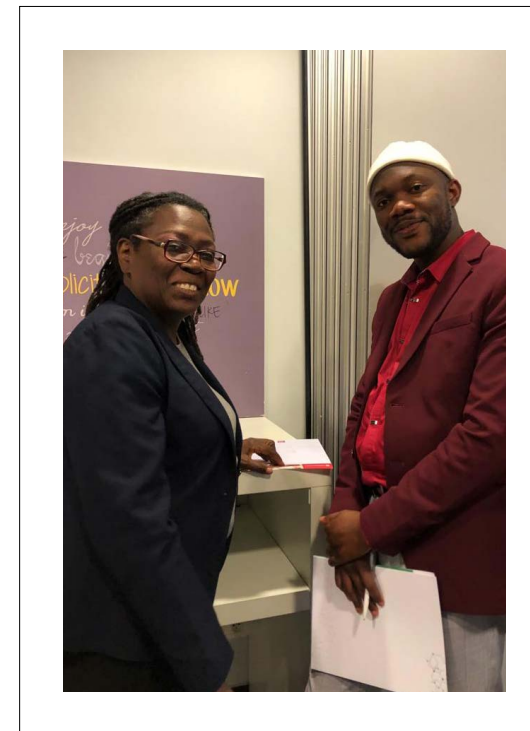
Special focus on “soft skills”

Unlike traditional project management training, the course had a special focus on training of trainers and the process of accompaniment of peers in project management. The experts presented different pedagogical methods and activities that diaspora networks can use depending on the learning needs of DOs. With this cascade learning scheme, FORIM actively encourages knowledge sharing between diaspora members.



The training on project management and accompaniment benefited my work in two ways: as an accompanier it positioned me to prepare diaspora organisations to face the challenges of submitting project proposals, and as a diaspora network it equipped me with good tools for our own project management.

- Diaspora network representative, trainee

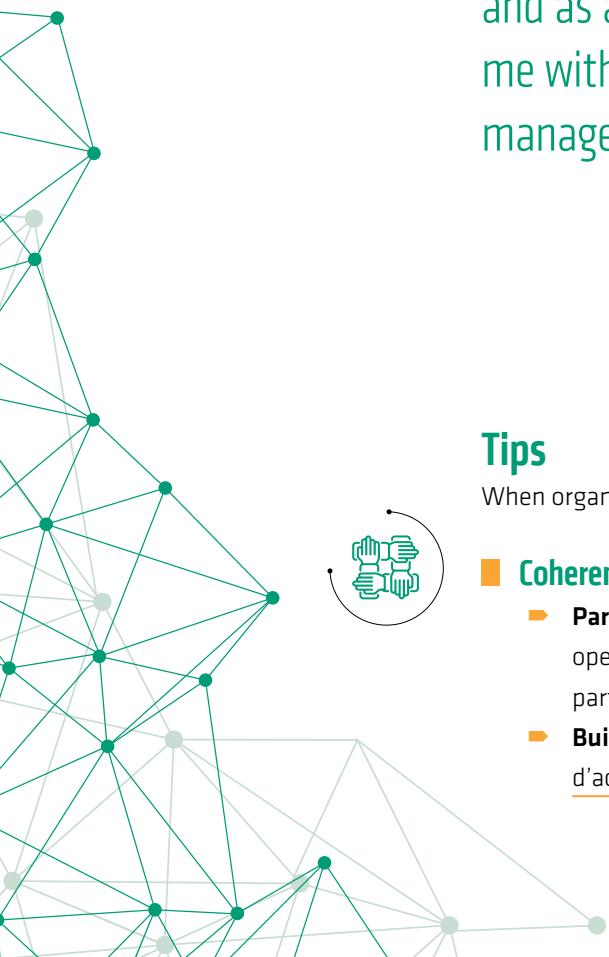
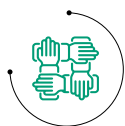


Tips

When organising training sessions for diaspora members, EUDiF recommends the following principles:

■ Coherence with existing work

- ▶ **Participatory approach:** The training material and sessions are largely based on practical examples and initiatives implemented by the support operators as sources for learning. Relying on the diaspora's experiences made the training sessions more dynamic, practical and useful for the participants.
- ▶ **Building on existing material:** This and the other workshops were designed to complement the "OPAP Accompaniment Kit" ([Kit d'accompagnement OPAP](#)), the guide for the support operators who accompany diaspora organisations in their projects.





Impactful design

- ▶ **Andragogy (adult learning) principles:** All training material and sessions follow adult andragogy principles.
 - Content is planned based on an assessment of participant needs. Therefore, the learning objectives are set with them.
 - Participants register for the training sessions of their choice, ensuring that all workshop participants are highly motivated and interested in the subject.
 - The learning is solution and task-oriented.
 - Sessions take into account the different backgrounds and levels of knowledge of support operators by offering a wide range of activities and learning material.



Mindful planning

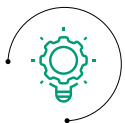
- ▶ **Scheduling:** The timing of certain training sessions was determined according to the PRA/OSIM application timeline, allowing diaspora networks to use the learnings from the trainings in their applications and, subsequently, in their project implementation. Many sessions were held outside usual working hours, and some are repeated more than once to ensure participants find slots that suit them and allow them to complete the full training, given that many support operators are volunteers.
- ▶ **Session formats:** To further accommodate for the availabilities of support operators who largely work on a voluntary basis, some sessions are held on site and others online.





Cooperative partnerships

- ▶ **Coordination:** EUDiF and FORIM worked closely on the collaboration, reflecting together on the choice of experts, content, format and results of the training.
- ▶ **Trust:** EUDiF and FORIM remained flexible throughout the process, giving the experts space to apply their approaches while maintaining high and common standards across the seven training topics. EUDiF and FORIM continuously encouraged the exchange between the experts to ensure synergies.



Sustainable design

- ▶ **Accompaniment resources:** The design of the training material allows support operators to share learnings with diaspora organisations. For example, each training topic includes “trainer’s notes” and tools to facilitate the cascade of knowledge from the support operator to diaspora organisations.
- ▶ **Storage:** All training materials and recordings are stored on a shared cloud accessible to all support operators who wish to replicate these trainings within their network and with diaspora organisations.
- ▶ **Recognition:** Participants receive certificates of participation signed by EUDiF, FORIM and the trainer to further add to the credibility of support operators as accompaniers.



What comes next?

With a portfolio of actions targeting different categories of professionalisation, EUDiF has developed knowledge to accompany diaspora organisations in achieving their professionalisation objectives.

Africa 2.0 Spain and FORIM networks developed their capacities at the organisational level. Through the development of a governance plan, Africa 2.0 Spain is better able to accompany the network of African diaspora leaders. Africa 2.0 Spain's organisational development process can be replicated for other DOs that are just starting or looking to formalise their governance structure.

As for FORIM, by developing the capacities of diaspora networks to accompany DOs and manage projects, both become better positioned to access new funding by designing, submitting and implementing effective development projects. The work done with FORIM can also be replicated. However, it requires a well-established structure that connects diaspora members, initiatives and organisations with each other.

For now, the partners in the examples shared above have a busy path ahead. Working with EUDiF to develop the governance structure of Africa 2.0 Spain and the accompaniment capacities of FORIM members strengthens both organisations to venture into wider areas of work in the long run.

EUDiF will continue to leverage peer and cascade learnings and create resources to help DOs professionalise.



At EUDiF we co-design actions with our diaspora partners so as to boost their own work on professionalisation, as all are doing this in one way or another. I find great joy in accompanying diaspora organisations and tailoring our support to each one. We draw on our network and knowledge resources during these journeys and adapt to each case. I am continuously impressed by the vision, capacities and commitment diaspora organisations bring to the development world.

- Hala Tarabay, EUDiF



Learn more



Diaspora Recommendations (2021)

Between November 2019 and March 2021 EUDiF organised a series of participatory diaspora consultations around Europe with 68 diaspora organisations and networks. This list summarises the recommendations that emerged on how to improve diaspora-engagement for development and integration. For the full report of individual consultations, read more here:

- ▶ [Diaspora consultation: South, Central & Eastern Europe](#)
- ▶ [Diaspora Consultation: Northern Europe](#)
- ▶ [Diaspora Consultation: Western Europe](#)
- ▶ [Diaspora Consultation: Southwest Europe](#)



For a better knowledge of civil society organisations in Europe (2023)

This white paper aims to work for a better acknowledgment of civil society organisations (CSOs) – private initiatives from citizens of collective engagement in instituted organisations or informal movements.



Europe's civil society: Still under pressure – Update 2022

Among other things, the report presents national, international and EU tools and guidelines supporting civil society organisations.



New tools to improve effectiveness of civil society

On this website, CONCORD provides several tools for civil society organisations to promote effective development.



The future evolution of civil society in the European Union by 2030 (2017)

In this report, the Centre for information service, cooperation and development of NGOs and the European Network of National Civil Society Associations analyse the main challenges faced by civil society organisations in Europe and the rising trend of professionalisation as a response to the challenges.



Organisational assessment tools (2017)

INTRAC for Civil Society developed an organisational assessment guide and tools to assess organisation capacities and plan capacity development actions based on the results.



The Global Standard Guidance Materials – 12 Commitments for dynamic accountability (2017)

The Guidance Materials offer practical advice on how to use the Global Standard to various stakeholders, such as individual CSOs, policy makers and funders.



CSO Management Practical tools for organisational development analysis (2011)

The aim of the manual is to increase the internal capacities of CSOs for more effective action.



European Union Global Diaspora Facility

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