Learning by doing

An **EUDiF**

series drawing on research and
capacity development actions

STRENGTHENING THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
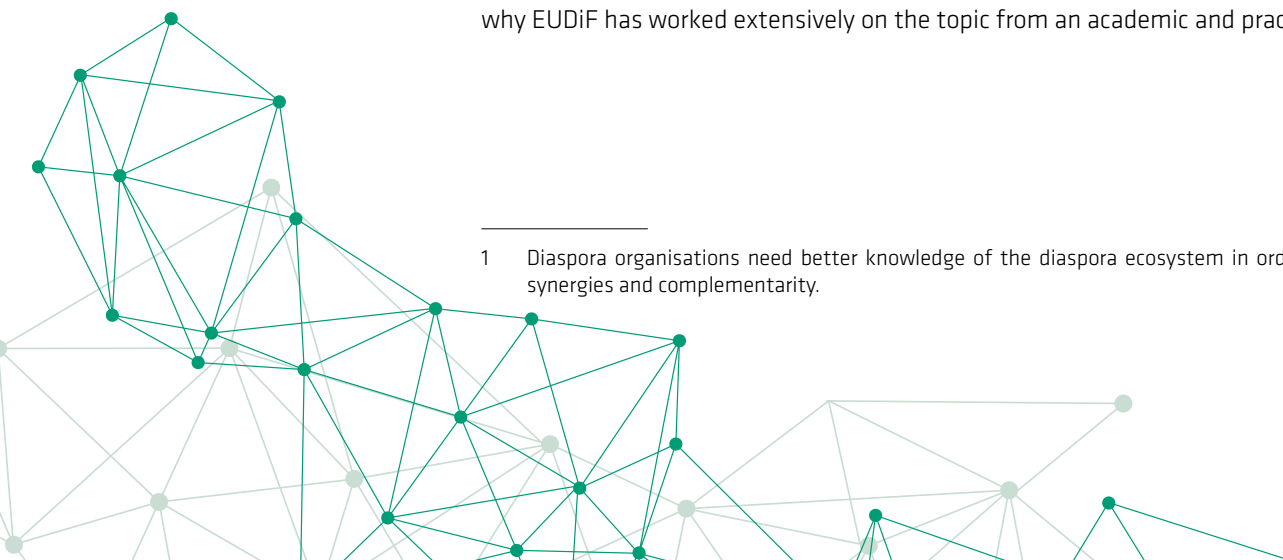## Creating diaspora skill profiles

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Context

The starting point for successful diaspora engagement is data. Data are indispensable to inform policy formulation and identify opportunities for engagement for national authorities and diaspora organisations[1] in the country of destination. However, comprehensive and reliable data on diaspora is scarce. Improving data on diaspora is key to understanding and therefore better engagement for specific purposes.

Data on remittances are the most common type of data gathered related to diaspora globally. However, these are not sufficient to inform a sound diaspora engagement enabling environment. Moreover, even when it comes to remittances data, there are a lot of shortcomings as only formal flows are captured and only a limited number of countries of origin publish data regularly, often due to a lack of capacity to do so.

As a result, the development potential of diasporas remains mostly unmapped because of the lack of data and information in both countries of origin and destination in terms of the diaspora's location, structure, aspirations, capital, and contributions. The EUDiF regional overviews show that most countries lack systematic and comprehensive diaspora data, which limits optimisation of their potential contribution to development.

It is in this light that mapping and profiling exercises have great value in diaspora engagement planning at global, regional and national level, which is why EUDiF has worked extensively on the topic from an academic and practitioner perspective.

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1   Diaspora organisations need better knowledge of the diaspora ecosystem in order to pool resources, share good practices and lessons learned, as well as to increase synergies and complementarity.
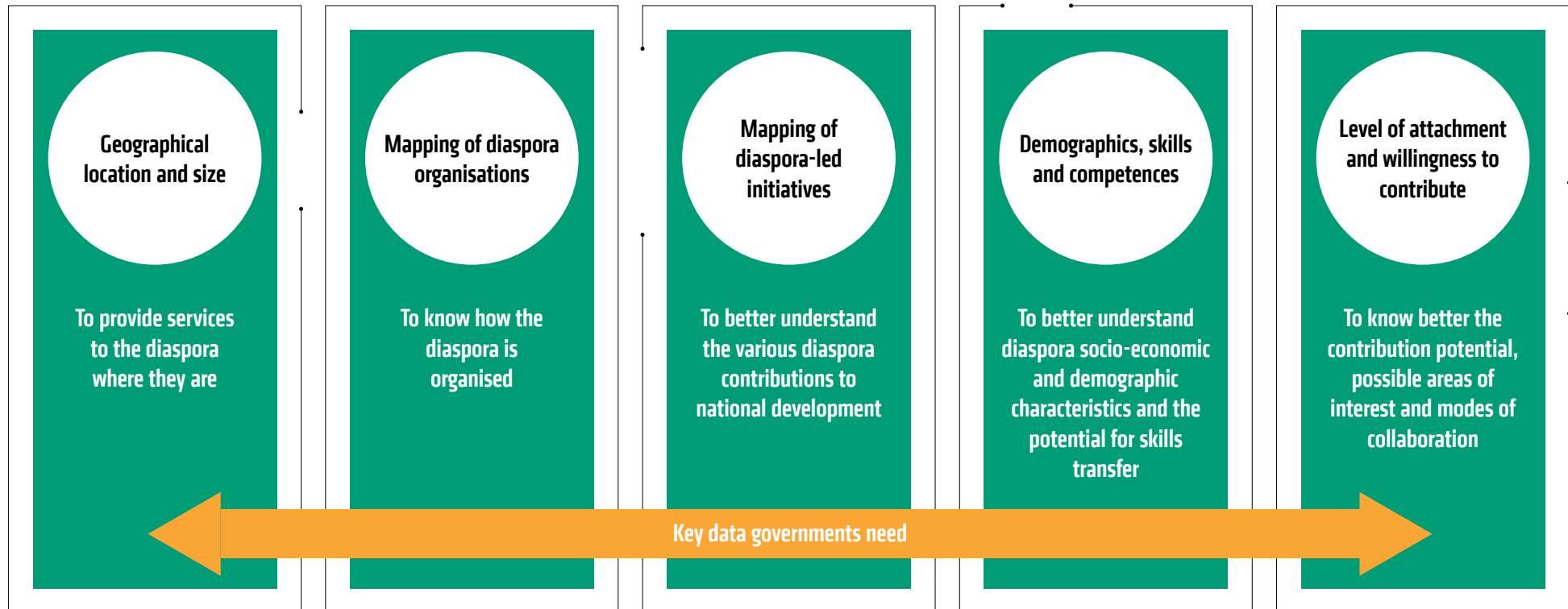
Terminology

The term **profiling** is usually used when we look at skills or personal characteristics while **mapping** is more often used for entities or geography. Both diaspora mapping and diaspora skill profiling have value and are complementary exercises. A skills profiling exercise includes elements of mapping, for example helping to identify where in a country/region of residence pockets of certain skills exist.

Note: In certain contexts, the word "profiling" has a negative connotation (e.g. criminal and racial profiling). It is therefore important to take care when communicating about a skills profiling exercise to avoid any potential confusion or distress.

Data types and challenges

Geographical location and size	Mapping of diaspora organisations	Mapping of diaspora-led initiatives	Demographics, skills and competences	Level of attachment and willingness to contribute
To provide services to the diaspora where they are	To know how the diaspora is organised	To better understand the various diaspora contributions to national development	To better understand diaspora socio-economic and demographic characteristics and the potential for skills transfer	To know better the contribution potential, possible areas of interest and modes of collaboration

Key data governments need

Data disaggregation by age and gender is crucial for identifying and addressing inequalities, allowing policymakers to tailor effective interventions, and promoting inclusivity in areas such as health, education, and economic development. It provides a nuanced understanding of diverse demographic groups, enabling targeted strategies to meet specific needs and monitor progress over time. EUDiF is systematically disaggregating data by gender in all its areas of work.

Migration in general and diaspora engagement in particular are sensitive topics. Policy decisions about engaging the diaspora rely on evidence, but producing this evidence is particularly difficult. Here are some of the reasons:

➡ The diaspora is hard to count because not all migrants are diaspora and not all diasporas have migrated

➡ Not everyone with a particular heritage self-identifies as diaspora

➡ Difficulty in reaching second and subsequent generations

➡ Diaspora members may not want to be registered at their embassies/consulates because of trust issues

➡ The capacity of national institutions to collect and analyse data needs to be further strengthened

➡ The costs of conducting a data collection exercise can be considered too high

➡ The informality and fragmentation of diaspora engagement makes it difficult to centralise information
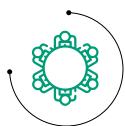
Identifying the best-placed actors to collect the data remains a central issue. National authorities have often found it difficult to reach the diaspora. Therefore, diaspora members can play an important role as gatekeepers.

Main approaches and tools for diaspora data collection

A multitude of data collection methodologies and tools can be used in a complementary manner. Here is an overview of the main approaches to gather data on diasporas, the first three of which have been employed in EUDiF research and capacity development actions (see below).

Method	Type of data	Description	Observation	Suggested use
Desk research	Quantitative & Qualitative Secondary data	Analysis of existing material such as reports or datasets. It is usually the basis of all exercises to get a first understanding of the subject matter. Embassies and consulates gather data through different means, such as registers of citizens abroad and mailing lists. Different national authorities can also collect data, for example of migrant workers.	➡ Pre-existing data should be used as a first step and in complement to other methodologies. ➡ The representativity can be limited as a whole segment of the diaspora can be excluded (e.g., people who are not registered on consular lists when using consular data).	➡ Can be used to map diaspora initiatives or organisations. ➡ For skills profiling or geographical mapping, desk research is mainly used to choose countries to focus on or to identify key stakeholders to involve in outreach activities. It is not a method to conduct the exercises as such as they require more personal data. ➡ See the examples of Madagascar and Saint Lucia ▶ **Page 13**
Survey	Usually more quantitative but can also include qualitative data Primary data	Surveying is a method of gathering information from a group of people using a list of questions to gain insights on a particular topic. Unlike a census, a survey is not aimed at covering the entirety of a target group but rather a sample of it.	➡ Flexibility: questions are designed to gather the needed data. ➡ First iteration can incur expertise costs (if capacity development is needed). ➡ Replication can be low cost and short. ➡ Take-up from the diaspora can be uneven. ➡ The reach and representativity can be limited.	➡ Suitable for skills profiling and gathering information on interests and likes (such as level of attachment and willingness to contribute). ➡ See the three examples below ▶ **Pages 13-15**

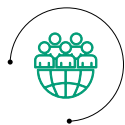|				
Interviews/ focus groups	Qualitative Primary data	These are methods to ask questions to an individual or a small group about a particular topic. The full list of questions is often not fixed and follow-up questions can be asked depending on the points raised by the respondent.	➡ Comes as a complement to more quantitative data collection method. ➡ Gives a "voice" to participants. Listening to the diaspora can help build the necessary trust to encourage respondents to concretely engage in the Country of origin. ➡ Possibility to delve further into sub-topics. ➡ Can be time consuming (setting up interview, writing up notes).	➡ Suitable to learn about interests and likes such as level of attachment and willingness to contribute or position on a particular topic. ➡ Unsuitable as the primary method to conduct a skills profiling or a mapping of diaspora organisations/initiatives. It is however interesting to use this method as a complement to the survey to gather further information or clarify points. This can be time and resource costly. ➡ See examples of Moldova ▶ **Page 15**
Censuses in host countries	Quantitative & Qualitative Primary data	A census is a systematic count of the number of people living in a country to collect information about them. It should count the whole population.	➡ In some countries, like in France, it is not allowed to collect data on ethnicity. Therefore, census data do not always help count diaspora. In addition, some countries do not ask about the country of birth of both parents or grandparents (making it challenging to identify younger diaspora generations). ➡ Reproducing such an exercise would be extremely costly and time consuming for a country of origin.	➡ Can be useful for geographic mapping and skills profiling, but not adequate to compile initiatives or map diaspora organisations.
Big data	Quantitative & Qualitative Secondary data	Big data is usually mined from social media or company websites. They can provide rich information based on content analysis that help determine patterns and enables predictions on diaspora behaviours.	➡ When big data is complemented with other data, they can be very useful, but they are not sufficient in isolation. ➡ It is costly and reliant on technology.	➡ Cannot answer all types of questions. Its use depends on the context.
Dedicated online platforms	Usually more quantitative but can also include qualitative data Primary data	There are many sites dedicated to gathering data on a given diaspora. These sites rely on voluntary registration of diaspora members who include information on geographical location, demographic and socio-economic profiles as well as their willingness to be mobilised.	➡ Useful to governments to have direct access to a database of mobilisable diaspora. ➡ Costs of website hosting and equipment. ➡ Time to gather data can be long and the take-up from the diaspora can be uneven.	➡ Can be used for all types of exercises: mappings of initiatives or diaspora organisations, skills profiling etc.

Our step-by-step methodology

1

PREPARATION

➡ **Methodology**
- Define key terms (i.e. diaspora, skills...)
- Evaluate the objectives of the data collection exercise: the clarification of the objectives allows you to specify the needs in terms of data collection.
- Identify existing data and expertise (i.e. pre-existing data, training needs)
- Address training needs (for more information on our training offer please contact EUDiF)

➡ **Tips and key learning points**
- 💡 **Be clear about the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder the timeframe and be ready to communicate about the exercise.**
- 💡 **Work hand-in-hand with diaspora organisations and key diaspora members from the start.**

Who leads counts

In the case of Saint Lucia, having the government step in and underline the official aspect of the exercise was well received by the diaspora.

In the cases of Madagascar and Moldova, it was seen as positive that recognised researchers, part of the diaspora themselves, and EUDiF, and EU-funded neutral intermediary, were managing the exercise.

Definitions make the difference

It is very important to clarify *who* is a diaspora. During the collaboration with Madagascar, consular staff did not at first consider themselves as diaspora. In the case of Moldova, the survey did not at first include second and subsequent generations.

The notion of skills also needs to be defined. In all three exercises the survey went beyond socio-professional categories to include transversal skills gained outside of work that could be useful for the CoO.

2 SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

➤ Methodology

- Use free tools that are easy to utilise and more accessible to Governments such as: Kobotoolbox, EUSurvey, Microsoft forms...
- Develop the primary data collection tool: a survey with quantitative and qualitative questions that takes about 10 minutes to complete.
- Write the survey introduction, the explanatory text before the questions begin.
- Close the survey by offering to send participants a summary of the results, ideally electronically.
- Run a test phase to make sure that the survey is ready to be shared by involving at least 10 colleagues and friends to try it out.

➤ Tips and key learning points

- Clarify the language(s) of the survey (offer it in the languages most spoken by the respondents).
- Keep the wording simple throughout the survey. Make sure the term used to talk about the "diaspora" is the most commonly used (not all countries use the term diaspora!)
- Use selection criteria to confirm those responding are from the targeted segment of the diaspora.
- Use a variety of question types (yes/no, multiple choice, on frequency...).
- Be mindful that open-ended questions can provide you with interesting insights, but the answers to these questions will have to be analysed qualitatively, which can be very time-consuming. It is therefore advisable to limit the number of open-ended questions in each survey and to limit the number of characters per question (e.g. maximum 50 characters)
- In the testing phase check the different possible combinations of answers to make sure that the logic works, that all questions are easy to understand, and to avoid typos.

3 DATA COLLECTION

➤ Methodology

- Multiply the communication channels: use social media, email, face to face events, online tools, paper flyers...
- Offer different options to fill out the survey, complementing online with paper versions available in embassies and consulates, or providing responses via a hotline.

➤ Tips and key learning points

- Target and segment communication about the data collection exercise.
- Set aside a budget for printing, paper surveys, flyers and posters.
- Have a dedicated person in charge of coordination and mobilisation of diaspora organisations and key diaspora members. Ideally, this should include both ongoing relationships with key members of the diaspora, as well as reaching out to people outside of these circles.
- Be careful about timing! Try to capitalise on national celebrations, avoid overlap with other surveys/government activities, plan in advance and in coordination with other key actors.

4 DATA ANALYSIS

Methodology

- Clean and prepare the data for analysis.
- Cross-reference the cleaned data to find the most interesting combinations to present. To do this we created pivot tables in Excel.
- Choose the story to tell and focus on the relevant data.
- Create graphs to illustrate the story.

Tips and key learning points

- **Allocate sufficient time to the analysis, especially because of the reclassification of socio-professional category (SPC), industry and type of occupation is done manually**
- **Conclude the analysis by emphasising the usefulness of the results, their relevance and contextualise them with past and/or future exercises.**

5 DISSEMINATION

Methodology

- Follow up with the people contacted during the data collection phase and send them a thank you message with the results of the survey.
- Take a targeted approach to disseminate the results by using channels where diaspora professionals interact, such as LinkedIn/social media.

Tips and key learning points

- **Share results in different formats for relevant ministries, the private sector, civil society, members of the diaspora and NGOs, and academics to encourage broad use of the data.**
- **Organise dissemination events (online or in person).**

Data collection in action

Through EUDiF's research, dialogue and capacity development activities, we have built theoretical and practical knowledge on the different ways to gather data on diasporas. Over time, we have built experience in gathering the five main types of data mentioned above using a mix of approaches according to circumstance.

The global mapping covers **geographical data** and information on existing **diaspora organisations** and their initiatives which was collected using **desk research** and (some) **interviews**. Diaspora initiatives and organisations are also further explored through our dialogue and capacity building activities.

Data on **skills and competences** and **level of attachment** have been gathered through capacity development initiatives using the step-by-step methodology outlined above, which includes **desk research, survey** and – at times – **interviews/focus groups**.

In this publication, we bring theory and practice together. In the following pages we share our learnings from the design and implementation of a step-by-step methodology to profile the skills of the Malagasy diaspora in France and Switzerland, as well as the replication of the methodology to profile the skills of the Saint Lucian diaspora in the UK. This is complemented by a sector-specific skills profiling of Moldovan diaspora in the higher education sector.

# Malagasy diaspora skills profiling in France and Switzerland

In partnership with the Directorate of Diaspora and Migration Issues, established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Republic of Madagascar.

Summary:

With support of diaspora professionals, the action sought to equip the Diaspora Directorate with the tools and knowledge needed to profile the skills of the Malagasy diaspora and measure their level of attachment to Madagascar.

How:

- Creating a methodological toolbox on diaspora skills profiling
- Training MFA and consular staff on the tools and methods to conduct a skills profiling
- Piloting the methodology in France and Switzerland
- Analysing data and producing a diaspora skills profile report

Report

Country factsheet

The action
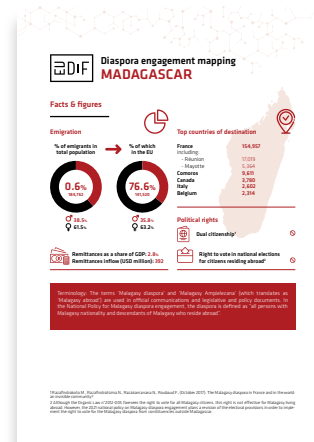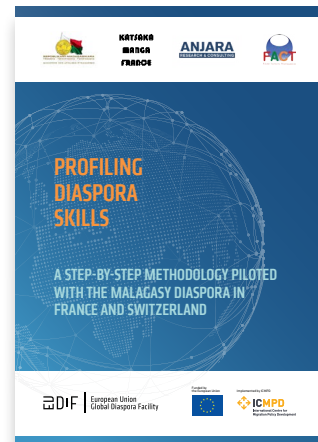
Saint Lucian diaspora skills profiling in the UK

In partnership with the Diaspora Affairs Office, established within the Ministry of External Affairs, International Trade, Civil Aviation and Diaspora Affairs of Saint Lucia.
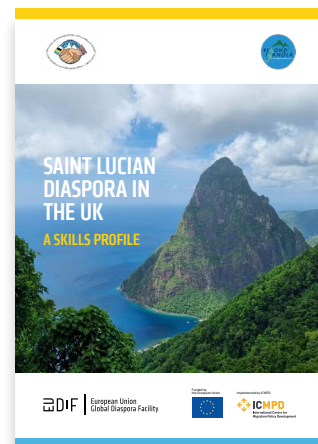
Summary:

Working with a diaspora professional, the action aimed to equip the Diaspora Affairs Office with the tools and knowledge needed to map the technical, intellectual and financial skills of the Saint Lucian diaspora.
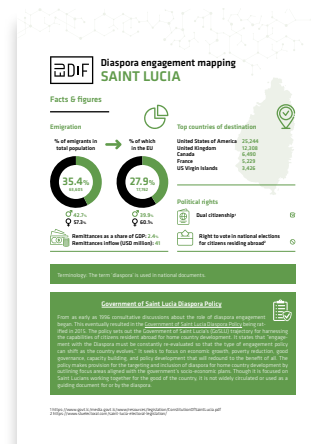
How:

- Replicating the methodology developed in the action with Madagascar
- Training MFA, consular staff and diaspora members on the tools and methods to conduct a skills profiling
- Piloting the methodology in the UK
- Analyzing data and producing a diaspora skills profile report

Report

Country factsheet

The action

Piloting diaspora mobilisation schemes in the education & research sectors in Moldova

In partnership with the Bureau for Relations with Diaspora (BRD), a directorate of the Moldovan State Chancellery which coordinates state policies in the field of diaspora engagement.

Summary:

The action was structured around three phases starting with an assessment of sectoral needs and academic diaspora profiling and followed by the development of guidelines for the creation of a co-working hub and piloting diaspora skills transfers in the education and research sectors.

How:

- Assessment of sectoral needs for expertise
- Survey and interviews/focus groups to identify relevant profiles in the Moldovan academic diaspora who can engage in knowledge transfers
- Roadmap to put in place a co-working model in the education and research sectors in Moldova
- Piloting phase: Diaspora skills transfers in education and research sectors

Country factsheet
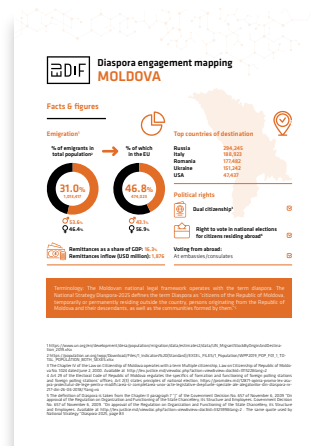
The action

What comes next?

All three countries are looking at replicating profiling exercises in other strategic countries of destination and/or continuing the work in view to leverage skills identified in the diaspora.

- ✓ The results of the work in Madagascar will now feed into the design and implementation of a new initiative, TATsoroka ho an'ny Diaspora (TADY), funded by the French Development Agency (AfD). The results can also serve as a basis for a larger data collection exercise on diaspora skills internationally (i.e., in North America and Africa) as well as to put in place a skill transfer scheme.
- ✓ Saint Lucia has expressed the wish to replicate the profiling exercise in the USA.
- ✓ The results from the data collection held under the action in Moldova are now used to identify key diaspora members to help shape a coworking hub in Moldova and to participate in a pilot skill transfer scheme in higher education.

If you are a government interested in EUDiF's approach and support to conduct diaspora skills profiling, please do not hesitate to contact us.

" Empowering national authorities and the diaspora is crucial in conducting a skills profiling exercise. Building internal capacities within MFAs and fostering collaboration with the diaspora from the outset not only enhances skills but also cultivates trust, making them key gatekeepers of this transformative process. In Saint Lucia, extending the training to include diaspora members based in the UK was quite special. "

- Fanny Tittel-Mosser,
Research and Knowledge Management Officer, EUDiF

The diaspora added-value

Trust is central to data collection. A combination of diaspora and non-diaspora experts can be useful to conduct data collection exercises, as trust dynamics can be complex. In the case of Madagascar and Moldova at least some of the experts were members of the diaspora being studied and well-known academics recognised in the country of origin. The experts had previous experience in conducting surveys, interviews, and focus groups. They also knew well the context in the home country and within the diaspora. This helped with building trust and adapting the methods and language of the data collection.

In the case of Saint Lucia, we put capacity development at the centre of the exercise and replicated the skills profiling methodology from a learning by doing perspective. We worked with an expert who is an active member of the SLU diaspora, and has strong ties to the national authorities. It was her first time to conduct a skills profiling exercise, so she was accompanied by the EUDiF team on how to conduct all steps of the methodology while implementing the action. This means the expert will be able to help replicate such an exercise in the future, as well as cascade her knowledge to relevant stakeholders. This learning by doing approach enhances the sustainability of the action.

Embassies, consulates and diaspora organisations play a key role as gatekeepers in data collection exercises. However, they often have neither the competences, means nor infrastructures to do so. In addition, diaspora gatekeepers contribute to the difficult but critical task of ensuring the buy-in of the diaspora and convincing them to share their data. Hiring an 'independent' expert can help circumvent trust issues when the diaspora is polarised or in opposition to the government of the country of origin. It is important to consider the context in each country in order to propose the most efficient combination of data-collectors.

Top 5 reasons why diaspora communities should be closely involved in data collection exercises:

- Grant access to all segments of the diaspora.
- Increase credibility of the study by explaining to potential participants the purpose and benefits of participating.
- Mitigate political sensitivity allowing the participation of segments of the diaspora that might be antagonist towards the government by presenting the data collection as a co-owned exercise benefiting all.
- Build organisational capacity in diaspora organisations to ensure they are active contributors to data collection e.g., peer-to-peer training across diaspora organisations.
- To support the move from data to action. By being involved from the start, the diaspora will expect the data to be used for further engagement and will be vocal about it.

Learn more

On diaspora data and the SDGs

IOM (2021). **Leave No Migrant Behind: The 2030 Agenda and Data Disaggregation**

United Nations Statistics Division (2017). **ESA/STAT/AC.339/1 Improving migration data in the context of the 2030 Agenda**

United Nations Statistics Division (2017). **United Nations Expert Group Meeting Improving Migration Data in the Context of the 2030 Agenda New York Headquarters**, 20-22 June 2017 Recommendations.

For examples of skills profiling

IOM (2019). **LINK IT, Skills Profiling Report July 2019**. Available at : Skills-Profiling-Report-July-2019-LINK-IT (1).pdf (iom.int)

IOM (2018c). **Mapping the Rwandan Diaspora in Belgium**. Available at : https://publications.iom.int/books/mapping-rwandan-diaspora-belgium

Randrianarisoa A. et al (2022). **Profiling Diaspora Skills: a Step-by-step Methodology**, EUDiF case study, Brussels: ICMPD.

Randrianarisoa A. et al (2022). **Profilage des compétences de la diaspora Malagasy en France et en Suisse**, EUDIF, Bruxelles : ICMPD (only available in French).

For examples of digital registration platforms

Barbados: https://www.foreign.gov.bb/barbados-national-registry/

Cabo Verde: https://dei.gov.cv/

Côte d'Ivoire: https://diasporacotedivoire.org/Home/index#

For examples of diaspora mappings

IOM (2022). **Diaspora mapping toolkit**

For examples of mappings using big data

Alinejad D. and al (2018). Diaspora and mapping methodologies: tracing transnational digital connections with 'mattering maps' 19(1) *Global networks*, 21.

IOM and NamSor (2021). **Skills mapping through big data: a case study of Armenian diaspora in the United States of America and France**

See also the work of the Harvard Growth Lab: https://growthlab.cid.harvard.edu/videos/engaging-diasporas-around-world

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