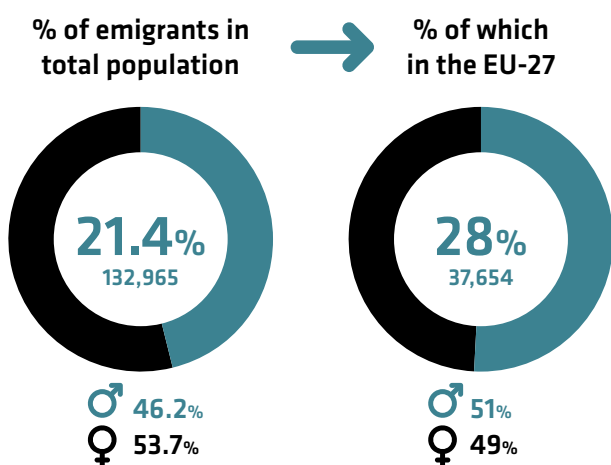


Diaspora engagement mapping

MONTENEGRO¹

Facts & figures

Emigration²



Top countries of destination³

Serbia	72,596
Germany	17,407
North Macedonia	9,269
Croatia	5,815
Slovenia	3,541

Political rights



Dual nationality: Ambiguous⁴



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad⁵



¹ This factsheet was produced under the ECONIDAS project, which examined diaspora engagement with the Western Balkans. The research conducted in Montenegro focused on the engagement of its diaspora from Germany.

² UN DESA, International Migrant Stock 2020 (Destination and Origin). World Bank, Annual Remittances Data (Inflows), November 2022.

³ UN DESA, International Migrant Stock 2020. However, there is missing information on Montenegrins in the US and Turkey. According to the report of 2013, there are 24,112 Montenegrins in the United States of America, and 54,850 in Turkey.

⁴ According to Jelena Dzankic, European University Institute, EUDO Citizenship Observatory, country report Montenegro: "The question of dual citizenship in Montenegro is a rather politically sensitive one...provisions of the Citizenship Act reflect the ambiguity over whether dual nationality is possible in Montenegro or not. Art. 2 of the Citizenship Act notes that 'a Montenegrin citizen holding at the same time also the citizenship of a foreign country' will be considered a Montenegrin citizen when dealing with Montenegrin authorities. Such a provision implies that it is possible to hold multiple nationalities, including the Montenegrin one. However, the present conditions for naturalisation conflict with this provision, in that a foreign citizen is requested to obtain release from his/her other nationality in order to obtain the Montenegrin one (art. 8, para. 2 The only dual nationality agreement that Montenegro has concluded is with North Macedonia. However, the agreement does not regulate any matters related to the acquisition or loss of nationality. If the laws were consistently applied, the only people in possession of dual nationality in Montenegro would be the ones who possessed nationality of Montenegro and another country before 3 June 2006. An exception to this norm concerns those citizens naturalised pursuant to arts. 10, 11, and 12 of the Citizenship Act, who are not required to submit the release from their original nationality when being admitted into Montenegrin nationality. However, practice has shown that it is possible for the citizens of Montenegro residing outside the Balkans (e.g. EU, United States, Canada, etc.) to obtain dual nationality on the grounds of art. 8 alone. In some cases, citizens from the other republics of the former Yugoslavia were able to do so as well. Still, as nationality issues are rather complex in the region, and checking is facilitated by the similarities of language, it is generally more difficult to obtain dual nationality." Available at: <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/19627>.

⁵ Montenegro, Law on Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament (1998, amended 2016). Article 88. Voters staying abroad shall cast their votes at polling stations in the area of their last place of permanent residence in the territory of Montenegro before they went abroad.

Terminology: Since the 2020 Strategy of cooperation with the diaspora-emigrants was passed, the term that is used is diaspora-emigrants (*dijaspora-iseljenici*). The definition of the term from the Strategy is: "Diaspora-emigrants are considered to be Montenegrin citizens and other persons descending from Montenegro, who live abroad and view Montenegro as their mother state, or a state of their descent, as well as hold it as a democratic, independent, sovereign and civil state". All emigrants are subsumed under this 'joint' category. The term was expanded when the new Strategy was passed to include different attitudes among diaspora members towards their status, as some prefer to be referred to as diaspora members and others as emigrants. In this case the term diaspora refers more to the attachment to the country of origin and the term emigrants refers to the fact that persons left the country of birth for longer than one year.

Montenegro has a diaspora engagement policy



The Government of Montenegro passed the Strategy of Cooperation with Diaspora-Emigrants for the timeframe 2020-2023, together with an action plan. The main goals of the Strategy are: (1) preservation of the state identity of diaspora-emigrants and their belonging to Montenegro, (2) preservation of the cultural identity of diaspora-emigrants, (3) strengthening educational, scientific, cultural and sport related cooperation with diaspora-emigrants, (4) informing and networking with diaspora-emigrants, (5) protection of the rights and status of diaspora-emigrants, and (6) enhancing economic partnership with diaspora-emigrants.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2017** ● **The Strategy for Integrated Migration Management in Montenegro 2017–2020** was the first main policy framework on migration. The objectives of this strategy were to align emigration and immigration policies with EU legislation, strengthen the institutional framework, and establish a monitoring system for implementing the strategy and action plans. The continuation of this Strategy is the Strategy on Migration and Reintegration of Returnees in Montenegro 2021–2025 (see below).
- 2017** ● **Law on Foreign Affairs, Official Gazette, 70/2017** is the law that provides framework for Montenegrin relations with other countries. One of the tasks of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as defined by this Law, is development of cooperation with emigrants and their organisations (Article 13). This is defined within diplomatic-consular tasks also, as diplomatic and consular representative offices are in charge of developing cooperation with Montenegrin emigrants, acting with the purpose of preserving state identity and belonging of Montenegrin emigrants and their national and cultural identity in the country of settlement (Articles 17, 28 and 29).
- 2018** ● **Law on Cooperation of Montenegro with Diaspora-Emigration, Official Gazette, 44/2018 and 47/2029** provides the main definitions and proscribes the way cooperation with diaspora-emigrants is implemented. It also recognises the main actors in this cooperation and the scope of their authority, including the Department for Diaspora and Emigrants, the Council for Cooperation with Diaspora, the Committee for International Relations and Emigrants, Montenegrin Mothers Association, the Council of Minority People in Montenegro, etc. The Council for Cooperation with Diaspora-Emigrants is established by this act. The Council is composed of representatives of diaspora-emigrants, representatives of Montenegrin state bodies on the state and local municipality levels, prominent public personalities from Montenegro, as well as diaspora-emigrants.⁶

⁶ There are three relevant by-laws that regulate relations with diaspora: Regulation on criteria and procedures for awarding distinguishing members and organizations of diaspora-emigrants, Official Gazette 15/19, Regulation on evaluation of the programs and projects proposed by organizations of diaspora-emigrants, Official Gazette 16/19 and Regulation of emigrant ID form, Official Gazette 57/19.

- **Strategy on Migration and Reintegration of Returnees in Montenegro for the Period 2021-2025, with an Action Plan for 2021 and 2022** is the continuation of the 2017 Strategy for Integrated Migration Management in Montenegro. It aims (1) to ensure that migration management policies, practices and discussions take into account Montenegro's international obligations in the protection of persons seeking international protection, refugees and stateless persons, and that it recognizes the established legal framework for the protection of these persons; (2) to assist state authorities to address the challenges of international protection (asylum) and mixed migration in a way that takes into account the need to protect certain categories of persons; (3) to assist in identifying trends in the areas of migration, trafficking and other mixed movements and early identification of challenges and preparation of responses to them.



Trends

The Montenegrin economy relies heavily on remittances, which account for 12.6% of its GDP. Recognising the economic potential of the diaspora, Montenegro has launched significant efforts to engage the diaspora more strategically in economic development. In order to stimulate the exchange and cooperation, the Department for Diaspora and Emigrants was established, whose main task is to maintain relations with the diaspora population all over the world. Moreover, two strategic documents were consequently passed which laid out the direction of this cooperation. One of the main goals of the cooperation with the diaspora was economic exchange. However, due to a number of contextual and structural circumstances, the implementation was delayed and had not yet yielded the intended results at the time of research.



Achievements

In 2021, the Business Forum was initiated, which gathered successful businessmen/women of Montenegrin origin who live and work abroad. During the Forum, they met with the representatives of different Montenegrin institutions and discussed opportunities and mechanisms of cooperation. One of the topics discussed at the last forum organised in Bijelo Polje in 2021 was setting priorities for such cooperation. During the Forum, representatives of Montenegrin institutions elaborated on the country's development plans and discussed them with business diaspora members. Part of the programme encompassed "matchmaking" between Montenegrin companies and potential investors from the Montenegrin diaspora. According to representatives of the Department for Diaspora and Emigrants, several investments were already launched as a result of the Forum. This Forum became part of the traditional gathering called "Days of diaspora".

Obstacles



- **Political factors:** Political uncertainty following the 2020 Parliamentary elections impacted the country's institutions and their functioning, including relations with diaspora organisations. Additionally, political divisions are also echoed in diaspora organisations, hampering their cooperation both amongst themselves and with the country of origin. Proposed changes to the nationality policy further hindered cooperation. Cooperation with the diaspora is highly politicised in the country.
- **Limited economic cooperation:** Although mentioned in the policy documents, economic cooperation with the diaspora in practice is not a priority. There are some events that focus on economic cooperation, such as the Business Forum, however, most activities are about culture and identity.

- **Administrative barriers:** Information about procedures and the investment context in Montenegro is rarely accurately available online or in languages other than Montenegrin, while the paperwork is very complex and decentralised.
- **Low engagement of diaspora organisations:** Although there are a significant number of Montenegrin diaspora organisations, most do not have either formal membership or regular activities and projects. Most of the organisations are focused on cultural and humanitarian events rather than on economic engagement and are dependent on funding from Montenegro.
- **Low confidence in institutions:** For the diaspora, perceptions or experiences of corruption have hindered their engagement. These issues affect different aspects of society, including economic investment of diaspora members in Montenegro. Namely, as noted by research participants, potential investors have reportedly faced extortion or bribes to obtain licenses, approvals, or other necessary documents.

SPOTLIGHT: Practices



Airline connection between Luxembourg and Montenegro

TOURISM

This project represents a successful and sustainable commercial connection between Luxembourg, a country in which Montenegro has relatively large community of emigrants, and Montenegro. The line is operated by Luxair, a commercial airline from Luxembourg. A member of Montenegrin diaspora from Luxembourg pushed forward the idea and provided essential contacts and recommendations, even at her personal cost. The opening of the line brought multiple benefits to both countries and various groups within both countries, especially Montenegrins. Tourists from Luxembourg are ideal clients for the Montenegrin tourism sector. Their visits to Montenegro have reportedly boosted touristic capacities, including hotels and restaurants. Also, it prompted Luxembourg companies to examine business opportunities in Montenegro and opening up employment opportunities for local people.

The Business Forum 2021

NETWORKING

Department for Diaspora and Emigrants started organising the Business Forum within the traditional gathering of diaspora members: Days of Diaspora. The Business Forum is an opportunity to gather successful businessmen/women of Montenegrin origin who live and work abroad, representatives of Montenegrin institutions and businesses. During the Forum, they discuss opportunities and mechanisms of cooperation, and decide on priorities of such cooperation in the future. The last forum was organised in Bijelo Polje in 2021. According to representatives of the Department for Diaspora and Emigrants, five investments were already made as a result of it.

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 Edited by: **ICMPD**
 December 2022

Implemented by



Funded by
the European Union

