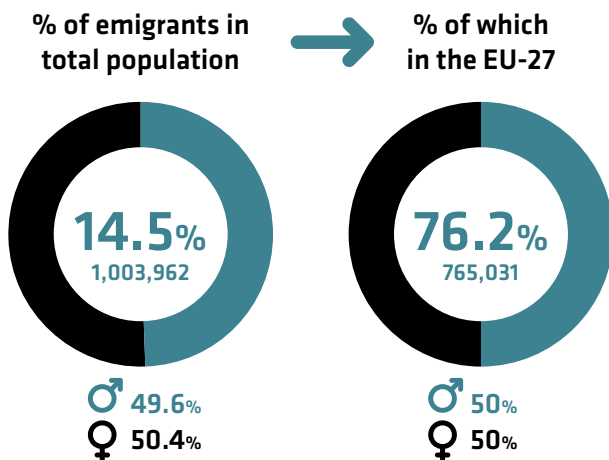


Diaspora engagement mapping

SERBIA¹

Facts & figures

Emigration²





 **Remittances as a share of GDP: 8.6%**
Remittances inflow (USD billion): 5.4

Top countries of destination³



Germany	199,691
Austria	177,609
France	96,899
Italy	86,911
Switzerland	66,207

Political rights

-  **Dual nationality⁴**
-  **Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad⁵ through diplomatic and consular representatives⁶**

1 This factsheet was produced under the ECONDIAS project, which examined diaspora engagement with the Western Balkans. The research conducted in Serbia focused on the engagement of its diaspora from Austria, Germany and Sweden.

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 (Destination and Origin).

4 Citizenship Law of the Republic of Serbia, Article 23, 2004.

5 Republic of Serbia, Law on the Election of Members of the Parliament, 2021 ; Republic of Serbia, Law on Election of the President of the Republic, 2021.

Republic of Serbia, Law on Election of the President of the Republic [in Serbian], accessed 5 April 2022

6 Serbian nationals residing abroad can submit a request to register in the unified voter list to vote in elections abroad through diplomatic and consular representatives of Serbia. The request should be submitted no later than five days before the conclusion of the register, i.e., 20 days before the Election Day. A polling station could be opened if at least 100 voters register. Serbian citizens can only vote in the elections for deputies of the National Assembly and the polls for the President of the Republic.

The Republic of Serbia has a diaspora engagement policy



2011 The Strategy of Maintaining and Strengthening the Relationship of the Mother Country and the Diaspora, and the Homeland and Serbs in the Region. The Strategy was developed in order to protect the rights and interests of the Serbian citizens abroad and improve the relationship between the diaspora with the country of origin. The main objective of the Strategy refers to the positioning of Serbia as a country of origin for all its citizens who live abroad, Serbs in the region, as well as Serbs from the region and their descendants. The Strategy is based on four main pillars that include: (1) Restoring diaspora trust in the homeland, (2) Improving the position of the diaspora and Serbs in the region, in foreign countries where they live, (3) Strengthening awareness among the domestic population about the importance of the diaspora and Serbs in the region, and (4) Networking. The Strategy also includes measures for strengthening identity among diaspora members and measures for its greater engagement for the purpose of local economic development. Overall, the diaspora policies aims to support diaspora engagement in Serbia, strengthen the ties with the diaspora, stimulate return and improve conditions for economic collaboration and transnational entrepreneurship.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2009** ● **Law on Diaspora and Serbs in the Region (“Official Gazette of RS”, no. 88/09)**. The Law provides the framework for maintaining and strengthening the ties between the diaspora and the country of origin, and deals with the institutional framework and overall collaboration between the diaspora and Serbia.
- 2012** ● **Law on Migration Management (“Official Gazette of RS”, no. 107/12)**. In addition to other forms of migration, the Law covers emigration, defined as the migration from the Republic of Serbia exceeding a 12 month period. One of the key provisions of the Law refers to the development of a unified data collection and exchange system in the field of migration management, including at the local municipality level.
- 2020** ● **Economic Migration Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the Period 2021-2027**. The goal of the Strategy is to foster the economic and social environment to deter emigration of the Serbian working population, strengthen ties with the diaspora, stimulate return and circular migration, and attract foreigners of various educational profiles. The Strategy has six specific objectives including ones directly related to diaspora engagement in local economic development such as improving cooperation between the diaspora and the country of origin and stimulating transnational entrepreneurship (Specific objective 4) and creating conditions for monitoring, stimulating and supporting circular and return migration (Specific objective 5).

» Trends

Among the recent developments in Serbian diaspora policies, of particular importance is the adoption of the Economic Migration Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the Period 2021-2027. It is the first document that systematically tackles economic migration issues and recognises the diaspora-local economic development nexus. In the institutional context, a significant step forward refers to the reaffirmation of the economic diplomacy as one of the foreign policy priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It will be implemented through the network of 103 diplomatic and consular missions in charge of strengthening Serbian economic position abroad. Finally, recent activities related to economic promotion of the local economic potentials in targeted markets should not be neglected. They are primarily

conducted by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Serbia through its affiliation network active in nine countries, five of which are in the EU. DACH countries – Germany, Austria and Switzerland, are covered by representative offices in Austria (Vienna) and Germany (Frankfurt).



Achievements

There are several recent achievements resulting from the engagement strategies pursued over the last five years and reflecting positive changes in diaspora engagement towards local economic development.

Institutional partnerships: The most important progress refers to the development of institutional partnerships between stakeholders from different sectors including entrepreneurs from the diaspora and regional business support institutions (e.g. regional development agencies). An example of such initiatives is the “Business Atlas of Serbia and Diaspora”, a platform developed with the support of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and regional development agencies in order to facilitate collaboration between companies and local administration with the aim to provide information and boost investments.

Investments: Several important diaspora foreign investments have taken place over recent years. The most important is the Mind Park, an industrial park based near Kragujevac, which provides full business support for investors interested in doing business in Serbia.

Obstacles



- **Low confidence in institutions:** A majority of business diaspora perceives state institutions as unreliable partners. Communication between business diaspora and state institutions including some formal business associations are still characterised by a lack of trust. Diaspora members also cite corruption as a challenge to their engagement.
- **Administrative capacity:** Some of the typical administrative barriers noted by potential diaspora investors include insufficient knowledge with regard to administrative permits, the local tax system, incentives, legislative requirements, etc. Research also shows that diaspora members perceive local institutions as not sufficiently supportive in terms of attracting investments. There are several stakeholders dealing with diaspora related issues, including supporting diaspora engagement in local economic development. Underdeveloped collaboration and communication mechanisms between key local actors, including both authorities and international organisations, can lead to inefficiencies in the implementation of diaspora engagement projects, where synergies may otherwise be possible.
- **Lack of data on diaspora:** There is a general dearth of complete and accurate data on the diaspora, their structure, and their ties to the Serbian socio-economic environment and their perceptions of the local institutions. Local authorities have insufficient information on the existing diaspora networks and lack capacities including lack of financial resources to be proactive in stimulating diaspora direct investments.

SPOTLIGHT: Practices



[Returning Point Platform/Tacka Povratka 2020 – ongoing](#)

REPATRIATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Platform has been setup to provide support to (potential) repatriates coming back to Serbia, including assistance related to investing and facilitating scientific and academic collaboration. The platform focuses on recognising highly qualified individuals, connecting local private and public partners with diaspora institutions, and identifying and removing legislative gaps and obstacles for investments and collaboration. The platform has been developed as a private-public partnership established by the Serbian City Club, Serbian Entrepreneurs as diaspora organisations on the one side and the Science Technology Park Belgrade on the other. It provides support through programmes of support across several fields (work, study, investment, contribution, and retirement).

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER, ENTREPRENEURSHIP

[Link Up! Serbia II 2020 – ongoing](#)

The programme aims at providing support to transnational entrepreneurship activities conducted by Serbian diaspora in Austria and other DACH countries. It consists of two components: Component 1 – Mentoring support, Diaspora business hub and technical support to local self-governments; Component 2 – Online platform for collaboration and business events.

RESEARCH AND NETWORKING

[Diaspora Research Programme 2019](#)

The Programme is implemented by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia. It has been developed as a one-time support programme aiming to connect local researchers and their peers employed with academic institutions in Europe. The Programme provided financial support for collaboration between the researchers from Serbia and the diaspora, including scientific visits and conducting joint research activities.

NETWORKING AND TECHNOLOGY

[Tesla Nation 2019 – ongoing](#)

Tesla Nation is an international network of entrepreneurs from the Serbian diaspora in the ICT industry. There are several associations of entrepreneurs and activists collaborating on projects based on innovation and technology as well as Serbian origin. The association works as a network of ambassadors, all of them either employed in large international companies or having their own start-ups.

RETURN AND REPATRIATION

[“Carta Serbica” 2022 – ongoing](#)

Set up in 2022 as a part of the “Returning Point” project, this initiative aimed at stimulating return of the Serbian diaspora to the country of origin. All citizens with Serbian origin who were born in the diaspora or who, due to certain life circumstances, left Serbia and renounced their Serbian citizenship, willing to return, either to work or retire in Serbia, can apply for the programme. The programme enable interested participants to obtain a temporary residence and work permit in Serbia for one year and the possibility to apply for Serbian citizenship. “Carta Serbica” provides additional benefits and incentives, such as tax and customs benefits, as well as the possibility of taking out housing loans for tax non-residents in cooperation with the bank “Poštanska štedionica”.

“Suncev zrak” 2020 – ongoing

“Suncev zrak” is a start-up which was setup with the support of the GIZ programme “Business Development Ideas”. Its mission initially referred to assisting mothers in breastfeeding and was later expanded to providing overall psychosocial support to families. The start-up was developed by a Serbian woman employed as a paediatric nurse with the university hospital in Munich, Germany.

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