

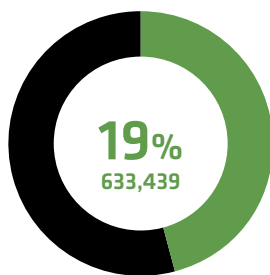


Diaspora engagement mapping URUGUAY

Facts & figures

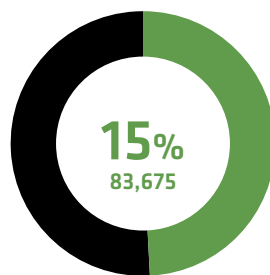
Emigration

% of emigrants in total population



♂ 46%
♀ 54%

% of which in the EU



♂ 49.2%
♀ 50.8%



Remittances as a share of GDP: 0.2%
Remittances inflow (USD million): 125



Top countries of destination

Argentina	135,076
Spain	75,539
United States	56,230
Brazil	32,331
United Kingdom	11,246



Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Voting from abroad



Terminology: Official documents do not reference the concept “diaspora” instead referring to citizens living abroad. The Diaspora is also referred to as “Departamento 20”, as an extra-territorial constituency.

Uruguay does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

¹ It is allowed for both natural and legal citizens to hold dual and even multiple citizenships. Uruguayan citizenship law is based on a mixture of *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli*, which means that in addition to being born in the country, which grants natural citizenship automatically, citizenship may also be acquired by means of descent if born outside Uruguay. It is also possible to acquire citizenship by law. The Uruguayan Constitution does not deploy the term “nationals,” instead referring to natural and legal citizens. Legal text available online at: <https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/constitucion/1967-1967/81>.

² Citizens residing abroad can vote in national elections provided they exercise the constitutional right in Uruguay, pending registration in the electoral roll 3 months in advance. Electoral reforms and enfranchisement, however, have been a matter of contentious public debate. A proposal submitted for referendum in 2009 did not obtain consent from the majority to enable voting from abroad.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2009** ● **Migration Law No. 18250 and Regulatory Decree No. 394/009** establish the legal regime for migration, with substantive amendments introduced during the 2009 revision. Institutionally, the act created the inter-governmental mechanism for migration (National Migration Board, JNM) which proposes and coordinates migration policies, assisted by an Advisory Council on Migration (CCAM). Enshrined by law, civil society and diaspora associations participate in the Council's working sessions through nominated representatives, which essentially institutionalises the diaspora's public contribution to policy development (Article 74). The Migration Law also stipulates the repatriation regime for citizens wishing to permanently relocate to Uruguay, with simplified procedures and several concessions premised on a final and one-time return.
- 2016** ● **Resolution 576/016** formally adopts the **Migration Policy Framework Document**. Particularly relevant to the diaspora, the document makes provisions for return migration including the range of benefits afforded to returnees, and for the engagement and protection of citizens residing abroad, "strengthening their participation and inclusion in national life" and their contribution to the "general development of the country."
- 2017** ● Revised **Law No. 19535** formally acknowledges the diaspora's consultative councils and associations as representative bodies for Uruguayans living abroad (Article 78). Overall, these organisations are constituted as citizen initiatives and are recognised by the Uruguayan Foreign Service through its diplomatic missions and consular offices. Moreover, both forms of organisation are autonomous actors, accountable to their membership.



Trends

Uruguay distinguishes itself in Latin America and beyond for its innovative, relatively stable, inclusive and - in many respects - progressive approach to citizenship rights, democratic practices, and diaspora engagement policies.

One of the first programmes for diaspora engagement was developed as early as 2001, initiated by the Presidential Office with support from international development partners. This first iteration, "The Linkage Programme for Highly Qualified Uruguayans Residing Abroad" (*Programa de vinculacion de los uruguayos altamente calificados residentes en el exterior*) sought to evaluate potential diaspora contributions and facilitate skills transfers for development and socio-economic growth.

Although Uruguay lacks a specific diaspora engagement policy, there is a robust legal framework that institutionalises diaspora participation in political processes and policy development. The laws formally recognise the consultative councils and diaspora associations as representative, autonomous bodies, facilitating liaison between communities at large and diplomatic missions, as the main interface for engagement. These entities actively participate through nominated representatives in national consultations and the working sessions of the Advisory Council under the purview of JNM (the National Migration Board). Regional meetings are held regularly, while the Global Conference for Uruguayans Living Abroad, inaugurated in 2015, is organised every two years, with vast community participation. The Ministry of External Relations (MRREE) has a dedicated portal for overseas engagement consolidating relevant information, news bulletins, demographic data based on inputs from consular registries and local censuses, as well as detailed mappings of the associative milieu by countries of residence.

In general, bilateral agreements with other countries³ enable the portability of social security benefits for citizens living abroad. Uruguay also developed mechanisms for protecting labour rights through an expansive consular network and regular contact with overseas communities. Moreover, consular offices provide a range of services, which include apostille and document legalisation, the issuance and/or renewal of identity documents and certificates, and passport processing, among others. Mobile consulates service remote regions, or communities unable to reach consular offices in person.

Over the past decade return migration has increased significantly, which prompted the government to reassess its posture. To further incentivise repatriation, returnees benefit from a number of tax concessions on imported goods, and associated entitlements, resulting from inter-institutional agreements. The Repatriation Office in coordination with the Directorate for Consular Affairs and External Liaison has elaborated a detailed Guide for Returnees, accessible on its dedicated webpage.

Uruguay's diaspora, locally and transnationally embedded, actively promote culture and heritage, reflecting deep ties with the homeland and ongoing advocacy efforts for historical justice and electoral reform. This holistic approach underscores Uruguay's commitment to harnessing diaspora contributions for socio-economic development, whilst promoting diaspora integration and participation.

Obstacles



- **Access to political rights:** Despite an intense mobilisation campaign from civil society and the diaspora, voting from abroad is not yet possible. A proposal submitted for referendum in 2009 did not obtain consent from the majority and electoral reforms have been a matter of contentious public debate. There is also an issue of uneven access to political rights, while some Uruguayans are encouraged to travel regularly to register and cast their ballot, for those residing much farther away exercising voting rights is almost impossible.
- **Disparities in social inclusion:** A Freedom House diagnosis suggests that disparities in treatment and political representation of women, indigenous populations, transgender people, and Uruguayans of African descent persist at a national level. Similar exclusionary practices extend to communities residing abroad. For instance, despite Afro-Uruguayan diaspora associations advocating for integration and racial equality, their engagement in national consultation processes appears to be limited.

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices



Consultative Councils and Diaspora Associations 2017

Uruguay has encouraged participatory and inclusive dialogue with citizens living abroad, formally/legally recognising the diaspora's representative bodies, and establishing parameters for institutional engagement. The councils and associations participate in regional meetings tackling matters of interest, such as integration and cultural activities, community outreach, access to public services and various events. Their scope is to consolidate links between overseas communities and Uruguay across myriad sectors, whilst preserving a sense of national identity and culture abroad.

GOVERNANCE,
ADVOCACY

³ In Europe, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Portugal, and the Netherlands, among many others.

Portal for Overseas (Diaspora) Engagement

The Ministry of External Relations (MRREE) has a dedicated online portal consolidating relevant information for diaspora engagement. The platform transparently lists the consultative councils and associations by country of residence and administrative region, including contact details. Additionally, MRREE operates an online registry for citizens living abroad through consulates and diplomatic missions; data is consolidated with local censuses, and published on the same platform.

Incentive schemes for potential returnees and Repatriation Guide

Uruguayans repatriating after a stay of more than two years outside the national territory, enjoy a range of benefits, which also act to incentivise return migration. The Repatriation Office, under the purview of MRREE, disburses entitlements based on agreements signed by the Ministry with other public entities. The scope was to ease the transition and reintegration processes. Benefits for returnees include the right to free public health coverage for one year, landline, mobile and internet plans for 90 days, and rental guarantees. There are also a number of tax exemptions on importing household goods and vehicles from abroad.

Annex:

List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Ministry of External Relations MRREE 1997

MRREE is a political and administrative body responsible for planning, directing and implementing the country's foreign policy and international relations. Its current mandate was established by Decree No. 197/997 (1997). Through an inter-governmental coordination mechanism, the Ministry also contributes to the migration agenda, publishing relevant information on migration issues and assisting citizens residing abroad with repatriation in case of emergencies.

- At sub-ministerial level

Directorate for Consular Affairs and Liaison DGCV 2008

The Directorate is subordinate to the Ministry of External Relations and is responsible for coordinating, planning and executing national policies on liaison with Uruguayan emigrants. DGCV maintains regular communication and closely coordinates with the consultative councils and Uruguayan diaspora associations abroad.

Compatriot Assistance and Community Services Office

Operating within the remit of the Ministry of External Relations, the service provides support to Uruguayan citizens residing abroad, primarily assisting with repatriation in case of emergencies.

Repatriation and Reception Office (Oficina del Retorno) OR

Within the remit of MRREE, OR assists potential returnees with the repatriation process and publishes relevant information regarding return migration, including legal procedures, eligibility, and tax exemptions for imported household goods. The Repatriation Guide available on the Ministry's website, was drafted in collaboration with the Directorate for Consular Affairs and Liaison.

Consultative Councils and Diaspora Associations 2017

While the councils have a representative function, socio-cultural and sporting associations are considered largely non-profit. Based on data published by the Ministry of External Relations, the 28 councils span globally, with a significant presence in North and South America, Europe and Australia. Both entities operate on democratic principles, autonomously from governmental institutions.



Diaspora organisations in Europe



ADEC la Cumparsita 1994 France (Paris)

☑ Integration activities

The association is focused on cultural activities through music and dancing classes. Its description relays that ADEC is one of the most sought-after tango classes in Paris, with dedicated instructors, but also a place for intercultural exchange.

Asociación Berlín Uruguay ABU Germany

☑ Integration activities

ABU focuses on cultural activities that maintain connections with Uruguay. Some of its membership helped curate an exhibition of the Uruguayan exile in Berlin, at the Museum of Memory.

Asociación Casa Uruguay” El Ceibo” (Carballo) 2005 Spain (Galicia)

☑ Integration activities

Founded in the city of Carballo, the association aims to create a socio-cultural space that links and supports Uruguayan residents in Bergantiños. In the past, it also co-organised academic conferences, in partnership with the Uruguayan Consulate in Galicia, the local council and the Social Sciences department, focused on the study of contemporary Uruguay through a sociological prism.

Asociación Charrúa de Uruguayos en Huelva Spain (Huelva)

☑ Integration activities

According to its social media description, the non-profit association focuses on socio-cultural activities, with heritage being central to its mission.

Asociación Cultural Eurudombe Spain (Malaga)

☑ Integration activities

The association has an active online presence on social media channels (including YouTube) and aims to preserve culture and traditions rooted in Candombe, through openness and exchange. One spinoff initiative is the *Club Uruguay en Malaga* (under the association’s patronage), focusing on similar activities, as well as sports.

Asociación Cultural Muralfolk (Lugo) Spain (Galicia)

☑ Integration activities

The cultural association is renowned for its dedication to Arts in general, with an emphasis on heritage preservation and cultural dissemination through folk music and dance. It co-organises in Lugo, the International Folk Festival “Mural Folk” attracting worldwide participation. The festival became a long-standing tradition in Lugo, having reached multiple editions.

Asociación Cultural Uruguayo-Catalana de Rubi “Los Botijas”, 2001, Spain (Barcelona)

✔ Integration activities

Promotes integration and the dissemination of Uruguayan culture in Catalonia. It purports to offer classes and workshops, centred on traditional dances such as El Ceibo. The association also participated in the *International Day for Cultural Diversity in Sant Martí*, a worldwide celebration of traditions, gastronomy, and culture.

Asociación Cultural y social uruguayos y uruguayas en Valencia Spain

✔ Integration activities

Aims to promote and disseminate the culture of Uruguay in Valencia, as well as to foster integration among Uruguayans. The organisation offers various courses/workshops and focuses on community cohesion through socialisation activities.

Asociación Cultural y Social Uruguay - Italia “Mario Benedetti” Italy

✔ Integration activities

Reflecting on the literary legacy of writer Maria Benedetti, whose influence spans both Italy and Uruguay, the association pursues cultural activities. Currently, it functions as a social media group “that brings together people interested in sharing aspects related to socio-cultural life in Uruguay and Italy”.

Asociación de Jubilados y Pensionistas Uruguayos Radicados en España, AJUPEN-URE Spain (Valencia)

✔ Integration activities

The association assists and provides services to Uruguayans living in Spain (Valencia), particularly to retirees. It is civically active, and its blog page lists a series of petitions, proposals and requests submitted to various institutions both in Uruguay and Spain.

Asociación de Uruguayos de las Palmas de Gran Canaria Spain

✔ Integration activities

The association provides a space for socialisation and support for Uruguayans living in Las Palmas, promoting the integration and welfare of the community. Its activities also focus on cultural identity and the preservation of traditions through celebrations and other events.

Asociación de uruguayos y amigos de la Costa Blanca / Alafás del Pí – Alicante Spain (Valencia)

✔ Integration activities

Located in Alicante the association receives support from the local town council (Generalitat Valenciana) and focuses on cultural and community events, such as national commemorations and exhibitions of Uruguayan artists at the *Casa de Cultura* in L'Alfas. It also invites lectures from Uruguayan writers and has an active role in the cultural integration of communities.

Asociación Galleguayos 2019 Spain (Galicia)

☑ Integration activities

Promotes socio-cultural activities and the integration of Uruguayan communities in Spain. Apart from offering community support, the association also disseminates relevant information.

Asociación Lucana de Paysandú Italy & Uruguay

☑ Integration activities

The non-profit organisation aims to bring together the descendants of immigrants from Lucania, Italy, who settled in Paysandu, Uruguay. It aims to preserve and promote the culture, traditions and links of the Lucanian in the region. The association participates in local events such as the Italian Week, and maintains links with *Università degli Studi della Basilicata*, strengthening educational and cultural ties between Uruguay and Italy.

Asociación Rioplatenses de Lugo (Ferrol) 2007 Spain (Galicia)

☑ Integration activities

According to its official website, the association was founded by a group of immigrants seeking to preserve the multiculturalism of Rio de la Plata with Galician communities having historically settled in Argentina and Uruguay. The association also helps returnees to Spain, by establishing support networks and offering specialised assistance for resettlement and reintegration.

Asociación socio-cultural Danzarte en Movimiento Canarias 2018 Spain (Tenerife)

☑ Integration activities

The association promotes societal change through music, arts, dance, sports and new technologies, working through a gamut of social projects with marginalised segments of society. The association is premised on collaborations between public, private and civil society sectors to achieve a better quality of life for society in general.

Asociación Uruguay Córdoba Spain (Cordoba)

☑ Integration activities

The association aims to reunite all Uruguayans living in the Cordoba province, through socio-cultural activities.

Asociación Uruguay Cultural Denmark

☑ Integration activities

Founded by a group of Uruguayans residing in Denmark, the association is dedicated to promoting Uruguayan culture and heritage.



Asociación ¿Dónde están? 1996 France (Paris)

✔ Development activities

Since its creation, the association has advocated for truth, justice and memory, reaffirming solidarity with the relatives of the disappeared and victims of the Uruguayan dictatorship. It also supports the initiatives of those associations, individuals and lawyers promoting the application of justice for human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed during the dictatorial regime. It demands the continuity of investigations to the benefit of future generations.

Bajocero Candombe Norway

✔ Integration activities

The initiative arose from a candombe workshop in Oslo, Norway, and centres on music and dance.

Casa de Uruguay en Barcelona 1978 Spain

✔ Integration activities

The organisation was founded by the Uruguayan diaspora in Spain fleeing dictatorship, with support from Catalan communities and public institutions, working in solidarity to denounce persecution and the regime of terror. The members of the *Casa* were politically persecuted exiles, some released from detention, facing a challenging integration process into the host society. Thus, cultural activities became a lifeline for most of its members. Its current focus includes exhibitions, literary prizes, book presentations, concerts etc. The Association “Amigos del Uruguay” administers the venue and provides a space for community socialisation.

Centro Uruguayo de Madrid CUM, Spain

✔ Integration activities

The association promotes events and activities for the Uruguayan community in Madrid through a variety of cultural and social programmes, such as rallies against impunity and the dissemination of artistic events. The centre collaborates with other institutions, such as the Government of Canelones in organising performances and promoting cultural activities. It is also associated with the Grassroots Committee of the Frente Amplio (a political outfit) issuing joint communiques.

Consejo Consultivo de Gotemburgo Sweden

✔ Development activities

Although its online presence is sparse, the council represents the Uruguayan community in Gothenburg and participates in regional meetings with other similar bodies and diaspora associations from Europe, tackling among others, extending voting rights for overseas communities, the participation of council representatives in the parliamentary commission on voting from abroad, awareness campaigns for the general public, UN consultations on the human rights situation in Uruguay, the reintegration of second and third generation Uruguayans through academic and educational exchanges, intensified skills and knowledge transfers between the country and overseas communities.

Consejo Consultivo de Residentes en Noruega CCN Norway

☑ Integration activities

The representative body for Uruguayan communities in Norway functions as an umbrella organisation disseminating relevant information as well as promoting the initiatives of Uruguayan associations in Norway and elsewhere.

Consejo Consultivo Uruguayos en Dinamarca CCDU Denmark

☑ Integration activities

The council offers advice and consultation to Uruguayans in Denmark, participating in regional meetings (Encuentro Regional del Departamento 20) a forum where it relays and represents the community interests. Topics of debate include outreach to second and third generations of Uruguayans, solidarity and support networks abroad etc. In the past, the council also cooperated with Casa Latinoamericana de Copenhagen, for promoting or organising cultural activities.

Consejo Consultivo de Uruguayos en Italia “La Cumparsita” CCUIT Italy

☑ Integration activities

The council was established to promote the integration and welfare of Uruguayans in Italy, as well as to maintain cultural and social links between the two countries, through a range of cultural activities (i.e.: theatre, and exhibitions). Overall, the organisation provides support and representation to the Uruguayan community, participating in regional meetings and national consultations on matters of interest.

Consejo Consultivo de uruguayos y uruguayas en Francia “Belela Herrera” France

☑ Integration activities

The council provides support and representation to the Uruguayan community in France, participating in regional meetings and national consultations. In the past, the organisation collaborated with academia, promoted socio-cultural activities (i.e.: film screenings), and engaged in solidarity initiatives.

Consejo Consultivo en Galicia Spain

☑ Integration activities

The council was established to promote and facilitate communication between the Uruguayan community and the consulate. Actions include advising on issues of common interest and the integration of Uruguayans into Galician society.

Danzas Uruguayas Grupo El Ceibo, Spain (Barcelona)

☑ Integration activities

The association promotes and performs traditional Uruguayan dances. It participates in cultural events such as the *Ciclo Cultural de Coros y Danzas Folkóricas de Entre Ríos* and collaborates with other diaspora associations (*Los Botijas* based in Barcelona) in the promotion and dissemination of Uruguayan culture.

Foro Cultural y Social Uruguay Noruega FOCUS Norway

☑ Integration activities

Aims to facilitate social and cultural exchanges between Uruguay and Norway. To some extent, it also engages in advocacy, disseminating on its social media page/group information and updates related to voting from abroad.

Hjelpemiddelfondet 2002 Norway

☑ Development activities

According to its official website, since its inception, the foundation has transferred knowledge about assistive technologies sent from Norway, co-organising training with hospitals in Uruguay and Latin America. The organisation supports people with disabilities by providing assistive equipment. In 2023, it shipped 149 containers covelatin America, including Montevideo.

Rompiendo Lonjas Sweden

☑ Integration activities

The performance troupe (drums) participates in cultural festivals across Sweden promoting Uruguayan music and culture.

Skanskandombe – Malmö Sweden

☑ Integration activities

The initiative aims to create a space in Malmö to study, develop and disseminate the Afro-Uruguayan Candombe rhythm.

Uruguayos en Mallorca Spain

☑ Integration activities

The organisation is listed as an official group of Uruguayans residing in Mallorca, acting as a platform for information dissemination and promotion activities, such as socio-cultural community events, heritage etc.

Uruguayos por el Mundo (Lugo) 2002 Spain (Galicia)

☑ Integration activities

The association focuses on socio-cultural exchanges and integration activities. Premised on inclusivity, it provides a space for socialisation for both Uruguayans and Galician returnees to Spain.

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