

Diaspora engagement mapping MAURITANIA

Facts & figures

Terminology: Mauritaniens de l'extérieur (Mauritanians overseas/abroad)

Political rights



Dual citizenship

Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad¹

 $oldsymbol{\boxtimes}$

Voting from abroad

\odot

Remittances



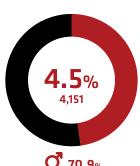
Remittances as a share of GDP: 1.05% Remittances inflow (USD million): 167.74

Emigration



% of emigrants in total population

2%



in the EU

70.9% Q 29.1%

Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from <u>UNDESA</u> (2024) and remittances from the World Bank (2023).

Top countries of destination



 Senegal
 47,547

 Mali
 27,160

 Gambia
 3,992

 Congo
 3,111

 Belgium
 3,018

Overview of the policy and legislative framework

2009

The Organic Law No. 2009-022 of 2 April 2009 establishing special arrangements relating to the voting of Mauritanians residing abroad, gives every Mauritanian citizen residing abroad the right to register to vote. It also stipulates that electoral operations (voting) must be organised in countries where at least 100 registered Mauritanian voters reside.

2010

The National Migration Management Strategy (SNGM) addresses a number of diaspora engagement issues, such as the needs to: improve the services for the diaspora by creating a structure that supports dialogue among diaspora organisations; better understand the size and geographical distribution of the diaspora; improve state responsiveness to cases of emergency involving citizens abroad; create an official diaspora representation to better integrate diaspora concerns into national policies; conduct a census of Mauritanians abroad; support "co-development projects" that involve diaspora organisations in decentralised cooperation with local communities; and facilitate and reduce the costs of remittances.

2016

The National Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity Strategy (SCAPP) 2016-2030 briefly notes (in the context of attracting foreign investment) the need to create attractive investment conditions for the diaspora, while also recognising (under the objective of strengthening higher education and scientific research) the involvement of the diaspora in supervising theses. Furthermore, the second SCAPP Action Plan (2021-2025) included the elaboration of a diaspora engagement strategy as one of its activities.

2021

Law No. 2021-016 modifying certain arrangements of law 61-112 of 12 June 1961 on the Mauritanian nationality code allows Mauritanians abroad to retain their citizenship when acquiring another (Article 30). The revised law also prevents dual nationals from holding public office (Article 31).²

2024

Joint Decree No. 000140 of the foreign and interior ministries reportedly listed the countries in which voting would be organised for the diaspora.³ It allowed for only one voting office per continent, despite the 2009-002 law stipulating that voting should be enabled in any country where at least 100 registered voters reside.⁴ This prevented numerous eligible diaspora voters, including some of the largest communities in Senegal and Mali, from exercising their voting rights.⁵ The government reportedly issued the decree due to their lack of resources to enable diaspora voting.⁶



Trands

Although the diaspora won the right to vote in 2009 and the National Migration Management Strategy that followed a year later addressed a number of diaspora engagement issues, the state's work on the topic appears sporadic and there is limited publicly available documentation of initiatives. Much activity seems to have taken place since 2017, which marked the start of the first project implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to facilitate the temporary return of diaspora professionals. The focus on temporary return continued in the years following, with 19 highly qualified members of the diaspora making

2 Le360 Afrique, Mauritanie: la double nationalité enfin autorisée, mais impossible de se faire élire, 20 June 2021. Available at: https://afrique.le360.ma/mauritanie/politique/2021/06/20/34686-mauritanie-la-double-nationalite-enfin-autorisee-mais-impossible-de-se-faire-eli-re-34686/ [Accessed 7 November 2024].

3 Mali Actu, La diaspora mauritanienne exclue du droit de vote : un enjeu majeur avant les élections présidentielles de juin 2024, May 2024. Available at: https://maliactu.net/la-diaspora-mauritanienne-exclue-du-droit-de-vote-un-enjeu-majeur-avant-les-elections-presidenti-elles-de-juin-2024/ [Accessed 7 November 2024].

4 IRA France-Mauritanie, *Des Mauritaniens Empêchés de Voter*, 17 May 2024. Available at: https://irafrance-mauritanie.org/2024/05/17/des-mauritaniens-empeches-de-voter/ [Accessed 7 November 2024].

5 IRA France-Mauritanie, *Des Mauritaniens Empêchés de Voter*, 17 May 2024. Available at: https://irafrance-mauritanie.org/2024/05/17/ des-mauritaniens-empeches-de-voter/ [Accessed 7 November 2024].

6 Afrik.com, Mauritanie: la diaspora privée du droit de voter, April 2024. Available at: https://www.afrik.com/mauritanie-la-diaspora-pri-vee-du-droit-de-voter [Accessed 7 November 2024].

temporary returns to Mauritania between 2019-2021.⁷ In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 12 of these 19 experts were healthcare professionals who supported the national COVID-19 response plan by facilitating skill transfers to medical personnel and institutions, filling gaps in specialised expertise such as intensive care, and assisting in the establishment of an Emergency Medical Assistance Service.⁸

In 2021, again supported by the IOM, the government began a participatory process to develop a diaspora engagement strategy, although the strategy has not yet been adopted three years on. A Directorate-General of Mauritanians Abroad (DGME) was also established within the foreign ministry and a unit was set up within the Investment Promotion Agency (APIM) to assist the diaspora in establishing small and medium-sized enterprises. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research also built on the aforementioned temporary return initiatives by organising an inaugural Forum of Mauritanian Diaspora Researchers in 2023.

While the diaspora strategy remains pending, the government has taken major, yet seemingly inconsistent, actions on fundamental diaspora rights. In 2021, it removed a longstanding engagement barrier by permitting dual citizenship in a law which simultaneously barred the diaspora from running for public office. Meanwhile, although significant progress was made by allowing the diaspora vote and designating five diaspora parliamentary representation, the government only allowed for one voting office in per continent in the 2024 elections, drawing the ire of the many diaspora members unable to exercise their legal rights.

On the domestic scene, at the same time as the country has been developing its extractives sectors over the years, a policy of "Mauritanianisation" of employment has been pursued to prioritise the employment of the domestic workforce. This has led to international companies operating in these sectors to seek out diaspora talent, in the face of challenges encountered in employing qualified talent domestically, although some have run-up against barriers to hiring diaspora expertise due to certain state-led hiring processes to which they must abide.

Obstacles



• Limited coordination among government agencies: The DGME is charged with coordinating diaspora engagement, although several other government departments and agencies, including the Directorate-General of Employment (which has a unit responsible for diaspora engagement), the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the investment promotion agency also have nominal roles or have implemented engagement initiatives. However, the DGME does not yet appear to have brought visibility or cohesion to the state's disparate diaspora engagement activities. As a result, diaspora engagement remains fragmented and piecemeal – often limited to projects supported by other partners.

7 République Islamique de Mauritanie, *Rapport National Volontaire sur l'État de Mise en Œuvre du Pacte Mondial pour des Migrations Sûres, Ordonnées et Régulières en Mauritanie*, March 2022. Available at: https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/docs/Mauritania%20-%20 Rapport%20Volontaire%20National%20sur%20l%26%23039%3B%C3%A9tat%20de%20mise%20en%20oeuvre%20du%20Pacte%20 Mondiale%20pour%20la%20Migration%20en%20Mauritanie%20%28Mars%202022%29.pdf [Accessed 7 November 2024].

8 République Islamique de Mauritanie, Rapport National Volontaire sur l'État de Mise en Œuvre du Pacte Mondial pour des Migrations Sûres, Ordonnées et Régulières en Mauritanie, March 2022. Available at: https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/docs/Mauritania%20-%20 Rapport%20Volontaire%20National%20sur%20I%26%23039%3B%C3%A9tat%20de%20mise%20en%20oeuvre%20du%20Pacte%20 Mondiale%20pour%20la%20Migration%20en%20Mauritanie%20%28Mars%202022%29.pdf [Accessed 7 November 2024].

9 République Islamique de Mauritanie, *Rapport National Volontaire sur l'État de Mise en Œuvre du Pacte Mondial pour des Migrations Sûres, Ordonnées et Régulières en Mauritanie*, March 2022. Available at: https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/docs/Mauritania%20-%20 Rapport%20Volontaire%20National%20sur%20l%26%23039%3B%C3%A9tat%20de%20mise%20en%20oeuvre%20du%20Pacte%20 Mondiale%20pour%20la%20Migration%20en%20Mauritanie%20%28Mars%202022%29.pdf [Accessed 7 November 2024].

10 République Islamique de Mauritanie, Rapport National Volontaire sur l'État de Mise en Œuvre du Pacte Mondial pour des Migrations Sûres, Ordonnées et Régulières en Mauritanie, March 2022. Available at: https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/docs/Mauritania%20-%20 Rapport%20Volontaire%20National%20sur%20l%26%23039%3B%C3%A9tat%20de%20mise%20en%20oeuvre%20du%20Pacte%20 Mondiale%20pour%20la%20Migration%20en%20Mauritanie%20%28Mars%202022%29.pdf [Accessed 7 November 2024].

11 Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, *Cérémonie d'Ouverture du Premier Forum des Chercheurs Mau*ritaniens de la Diaspora, 28 October 2021. Available at: https://mesrs.gov.mr/fr/article/le-mesrs-preside-la-ceremonie-douverture-du-premier-forum-des-chercheurs-mauritaniens-de-la [Accessed 7 November 2024].

- Absence of clear interface between state and diaspora: Communication between the Mauritanian state and its diaspora remains sporadic and reliant on informal channels, with official representatives often hard to access for those without privileged networks. Many diaspora are unaware of the existence of the DGME. Furthermore, consular services are insufficiently developed to either address diaspora needs overseas, or serve as critical in-person interfaces to build trust with the diaspora.
- National recruitment policy limitations: The recent growth in Mauritania's economy, particularly with offshore gas projects and new interest in green hydrogen, has spurred demand for specialised skills in fields like ICT, project management, and oil and gas. However, international companies have found it challenging to find adequate local expertise in the way that the state's "Mauritanianisation" policy requires. Some companies have tried to attract skilled diaspora members, hoping to bridge this gap, yet these efforts have often been conducted independently, without formal state involvement. Government policy aims to funnel much of the employment within these sectors through the stateled national employment agency (TECHGHIL), and has previously impeded companies from hiring diaspora members not registered at TECHGHIL (citizens abroad can supposedly register at TECHGHIL but diaspora members without Mauritanian citizenship are ineligible).
- **Practical barriers to exercising the diaspora vote:** As described above, political participation for Mauritanians abroad remains restricted due to resource constraints. Although the 2009-002 law guarantees the right to vote in any country where at least 100 Mauritanians are registered, in 2024 elections the government limited the coverage of polling stations to one per continent. This decision has prevented significant diaspora communities, such as those in Senegal and Mali, from exercising their civic rights.
- **Limited data:** Mauritania's government lacks data on its diaspora, including their countries of residence, their competencies, and community dynamics, although initial research has reportedly been conducted to identify Mauritanians in regions like Central Africa, the Gulf states, Europe, and North America. The data that exists appears limited to mapping exercises conducted by international organisations such as IOM and GRDR that now date back more than five years. Mauritania's diaspora is geographically dispersed and often organises around village or regional networks, leading to informal, localised interactions rather than structured engagement with state authorities. Development projects initiated by diaspora members in their home regions are typically conducted independently of government authorities, sometimes with the support of international organisations, or through informal family and community networks.

¹² Afrik.com, Mauritanie: la diaspora privée du droit de voter, April 2024. Available at: https://www.afrik.com/mauritanie-la-diaspora-privee-du-droit-de-voter [Accessed 7 November 2024].

¹³ IRA France-Mauritanie, *Des Mauritaniens Empêchés de Voter*, 17 May 2024. Available at: https://irafrance-mauritanie.org/2024/05/17/des-mauritaniens-empeches-de-voter/ [Accessed 7 November 2024].

¹⁴ Afrik.com, Mauritanie: la diaspora privée du droit de voter, April 2024. Available at: https://www.afrik.com/mauritanie-la-diaspora-pri-vee-du-droit-de-voter [Accessed 7 November 2024].

¹⁵ International Organization for Migration, *Mapping the Mauritanian Diaspora*, January 2016. Available at: https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/country/docs/mauritania/IOM-Mauritania-Mapping-the-Mauritanian-Diaspora-Jan-2016.pdf [Accessed 7 November 2024].

¹⁶ GRDR Migration-Citoyenneté-Développement, Étude Mapping sur la Diaspora Mauritanienne en Europe, January 2018. Available at: https://grdr.org/l-etude-mapping-sur-la-diaspora-mauritanienne [Accessed 7 November 2024].

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MAURITANIA

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

Strategic mobilisation of the Diaspora during the COVID-19 Epidemic (2021)

In response to the COVID-19 epidemic, Mauritania worked with the IOM in 2021 to mobilise diaspora health experts. The initiative involved creating a framework to coordinate health and resource mobilisation efforts, leveraging the diaspora's skills and networks to address urgent health needs in Mauritania. Activities included remote training for health personnel, funding for medical supplies, and information campaigns to raise awareness. The collaboration highlighted the diaspora's role in health crises, promoting the connections between Mauritania and its overseas communities while demonstrating effective diaspora engagement in emergency response.

Houwiyeti civil registry application (2023)

The Houwiyeti mobile application enables Mauritanians abroad to access their key civil registry documents online, simplifying application and renewal requests for documents like birth certificates, national ID cards, and passports – which can be ordered via the app for collection at diplomatic missions. By allowing users to verify their identity with an ID card number, the app provides convenient and secure access to essential services for the diaspora while reducing state administrative burdens.

Halaybé Association

The Halaybé Association, based near Boghé in Mauritania but straddling both sides of the Senegal-Mauritania border, established a participatory agricultural enterprise through collaboration between local residents and diaspora members. This 10-hectare project focuses on gardening production and was financed through diaspora crowdfunding, allowing both Mauritanian and Senegalese diaspora members originating from the region to acquire shares. The project has integrated an intergenerational dimension, with younger diaspora members born in North America and Europe making investments.

Annex:

List of Actors



Diaspora related institutions

At regional level

African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate AU CIDO

Mauritania nominates a diaspora focal point to the African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU CIDO) Continental Meetings, which works to coordinate diaspora policy across AU MS.

- National institutions
 - At ministerial level

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, and Mauritanians Abroad 1960

The ministry is responsible for Mauritania's foreign policy and international relations. It oversees the Directorate-General for Mauritanians Abroad, which coordinates diaspora engagement. It has a Minister-Delegate responsible for Mauritanians Abroad, 3 as well as a Directorate-General of Mauritanians Abroad.

Ministry of the Interior, Promotion of Decentralisation, and Local Development 1960

The ministry oversees internal security, public administration, and local governance in Mauritania. It is responsible for designing, coordinating, and implementing plans and strategies related to migration – including some aspects relating to diaspora engagement.

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research MESRS 2007

As part of its responsibilities for promoting higher education and scientific research in Mauritania, the MESRS launched in 2017 with support from the IOM a portal for diaspora engagement (now defunct), ¹⁸ and organised a diaspora forum for diaspora researchers in 2023.

At sub-ministerial level

Directorate-General of Mauritanians Abroad DGME (Unit within ministry)

The DGME is the foreign ministry's department responsible for coordinating diaspora engagement efforts.

Directorate-General of Employment (Unit within ministry)

Part of the Ministry of the Autonomisation of Young People, Employment, Sports, and Civic Service, the Directorate-General of Employment is responsible for the placement of Mauritanian labour migrants abroad. It has a division responsible for employment-related services to the diaspora but the division has yet to implement any specific diaspora-related activities.

17 Agence Mauritanienne d'Information, *Minister Delegate to the Minister of Foreign Affairs: Important Achievements Made for the Benefit of the Communities*, 16 May 2024. Available at: https://ami.mr/en/archives/16556 [Accessed 7 November 2024].

18 International Organization for Migration, *IOM Launches Portal to Map Mauritanian Diaspora*, 28 May 2018. Available at: https://www.iom.int/news/iom-launches-portal-map-mauritanian-diaspora [Accessed 7 November 2024].



Investment Promotion Agency APIM 2021 (Sub-ministry)

APIM, established by Decree No. 2021-017 as a public agency under the purview of the Ministry of Economy and Finance to promote investment, has a service dedicated to attracting diaspora investment. APIM has reportedly taken steps to enable online company creation, while also engaging with diaspora communities during their overseas tours.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Agir pour Sélibabi 2017 France

Read more about diaspora organisations in "Starting guide: What is a diaspora organisation"

Development activities

Originally formed as «Initiative pour le développement de Sélibabi» in 1995, this association reorganised as ARSEF in 2010, later evolving into Agir pour Sélibabi in 2017. It unites the Sélibabi diaspora to implement projects for the commune, focusing on youth, water, sanitation, agriculture, and anti-radicalisation. In France, the association supports families and provides tutoring for struggling students, while a sanitation project is underway in Mauritania.

Asociación de émigrantes mauritanos de Hassi-Chaggar en España 2008 Spain (Andalusia)

Development activities

The association provides a security fund for villagers, covering costs related to repatriation, funerals, and other needs.

Asociación de los jovens de Diaguily para education, desarollo y agricultura (AJDEDA) 2002 Spain (Catalonia)

Development activities

AJDEDA regularly sends medicines to Mauritania via shipments organised by the community. It also supports agricultural activities in the village of origin.

Asociación de Mujeres de Mauritania 2009 Spain (Catalonia)

Integration activities

Based in Catalonia, this association, currently restructuring, supports economic initiatives for women in areas like Mollet del Vallès. It organises events and maintains a female solidarity fund, creating spaces for Mauritanian women and women of other backgrounds to connect, share experiences, and empower one another.

Asociación Mauritania para el desarrollo y antirracista 2006 Spain (Catalonia)

Integration activities

Focused on intercultural exchange and integration, this association collaborates with local governments to foster community discussions, support public social assistance, and work with other associations in areas of public welfare.

Association Bagodine Yakaré Belgique 2010 Belgium (Brussels)

Integration activities

Development activities

This association promotes solidarity within the Bagodine community, organising gatherings and financial support activities. It also raises funds through cultural events, with proceeds directed towards development projects in the village.

Association Boulyenne pour le Développement et l'Insertion 1997 France (Aubervilliers)

Integration activities

Development activities

Operating in both France and Mauritania, ABDI focuses on healthcare, education, and rural infrastructure in Mauritania. In France, it supports diaspora integration through guidance services and home visits, with a focus on foreign-born individuals.

Association communale de Khabou en France 2004 France

Development activities

Founded to pool diaspora resources across villages in need, this association works in partnership with Khabou's local government. Projects focus on education, water, sanitation, and healthcare, with engagement with Mauritanian authorities and seven village-based associations.

Association de développement de Haimedatt 1999 Belgium (Brussels)

Integration activities

Development activities

The association has funded the construction of essential facilities like a school, cemetery, and dispensary for Haimedatt. In Belgium, it fosters solidarity among villagers, hosting meetings and pooling resources for continued development efforts.

Association des femmes de Djéol en France 2005 France (Noisy-Le-Sec)

Integration activities

Development activities

This association supports both Mauritanian projects and diaspora families in France, organising events for children and fundraisers. Activities include Women's Day celebrations, sports, and charity sales. Proceeds aid education and healthcare projects in Mauritania.

Association des femmes du Dafort en France (AFDF) 1991 France

Development activities

AFDF pools funds to support women's projects in Dafort, including building and equipping a maternity centre, aiming to improve health and wellbeing in the village.

Association des Femmes du Guidimakha en France (KAFFO) 2000 France

☑ Integration activities

Development activities

KAFFO represents women from 44 Guidimakha villages, focusing on integration and contributing to development initiatives in Guidimakha. Besides organising cultural events, KAFFO collaborates on development projects in their region of origin.

Association des Mauritaniens de Rouen 2005 France (Rouen)

Integration activities

Focused on supporting new arrivals, this association's main mission is social assistance, fostering community ties through annual events for the Rouen Mauritanian diaspora and promoting mutual support.

Association des ressortissants de Arr (ARA) 1975 France (Rouen)

Integration activities

☑ Development activities

ARA has initiated educational and healthcare projects, including school and health centre construction in Mauritania. In France, it organises sports events, such as football tournaments, to raise funds for continued community development.

Association des ressortissants de Talhaya en France (ARTF) 2006 France

Development activities

ARTF engages in development education and healthcare projects.

Association Fouta Vallé Développement (Fouta Dev) 2017 Spain (Catalonia)

☑ Development activities

Fouta Dev raises funds and deploys experts for projects in agriculture, environmental management, and crisis response in the Guidimakha region.

Association pour la promotion de la langue et de la culture Soninké (APS) 1979 France (Saint Denis)

Integration activities

APS promotes Soninké language and culture through literacy, tutoring, and administrative assistance. It organises the International Soninké Festival, celebrating Soninké heritage across various countries.

Association pour le développement, l'éducation et la santé (ADES) 2016 France

☑ Integration activities

Development activities

ADES assists Mauritanians in France with integration while supporting projects in healthcare and water access in Mauritania. The association's initiatives have included a health centre project in Niabina.

Association sportive et culturelle des jeunes de Wompou à Marseille 2016 France (Marseilles)

Integration activities

Development activities

This association works with its village counterpart to promote youth education and discourage dangerous migration. It organises cultural and sports events, supporting both integration and community building within Marseille.

Ensemble pour l'Espoir et le Développement (L'EED) 2015 France (Aubervilliers)

☑ Integration activities

Development activities

L'EED aims to improve living conditions and promote sustainable development in Mauritania, supporting health insurance pilots, agricultural revitalisation, and education initiatives in the country. In France, the association focuses on social integration.

Fédération des associations du Gorgol en France (FAGOF) 2006 France (Cesson)

Development activities

FAGOF organises and unifies Gorgol's diaspora village associations, facilitating collaboration with Mauritania's local governments and NGOs. FAGOF supports village education through technology initiatives and organises skill transfers between young people in France and Mauritania.

Femmes du Développement du Guidimakha en France (FEDDE) 2017 France

Integration activities

Development activities

FEDDE aims to economically empower women through agriculture, healthcare, environmental preservation, and rights advocacy. It prioritises coordination and structural support for female-led cooperatives.

Réseau des Associations Mauritaniennes en Europe (RAME) 2004 France (Paris)

Integration activitiesDevelopment activities

RAME was founded by Mauritanian associations in Europe seeking to amplify the diaspora's role in both Mauritania's development and in their European communities of residence. The network coordinates efforts across Europe, promoting the recognition of migrant contributions to sustainable development. RAME's key objectives are threefold: first, to federate and strengthen Mauritanian associations, pooling their resources to create a more cohesive, unified voice; second, to foster intercultural and intergenerational dialogues between Europe and Mauritania; and third, to advocate for Mauritania's development through diaspora engagement, including financial contributions and skill transfers. RAME facilitates projects that span local integration, cultural awareness, professional development, and the establishment of partnerships with Mauritanian authorities.

Réseau Diaspora RIM 2016 France

Integration activitiesDevelopment activities

Established by Mauritanian diaspora youth, Diaspora RIM promotes entrepreneurship within the diaspora, focusing on integration for new arrivals and reinvestment in Mauritania through competitions and training for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Union des Associations de Guidimakha en France (UAGF) 1991 France

☑ Integration activities

Development activities

UAGF unifies 47 village associations, providing structural support and acting as a development bridge with Mauritania. UAGF helps associations coordinate projects, addressing local needs from water access to healthcare staffing.

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Find out more at www.diasporafordevelopment.eu

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