



# DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

## In practice

# EMPOWERING THE IMMIGRANT DIASPORA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### Key messages

To facilitate knowledge sharing and investment, Italy has integrated diaspora communities from partner countries into its development co-operation programmes. It has included them in consultative mechanisms and helped strengthen the capacity of migrant organisations. Partnerships with local authorities and civil society organisations have strengthened and built on existing ties between communities in Italy and partner countries.

### Keywords

Civil society | Institutional arrangement | Partnerships

### Key partner

Italy

### Challenge

Migrant diaspora from developing countries and their organisations can make an important contribution to development co-operation: they can promote links between countries and populations, foster mutual understanding, make the case for development co-operation, and raise awareness of particular challenges. In many instances, their remittances constitute an important source of income and investment in the country of origin. Furthermore, they can share their experiences and transfer knowledge acquired.

However, compared to other civil society actors, the migrant diaspora often faces challenges to capitalise on this potential, not being a traditional partner for development co-operation and sometimes marginalised within society.

### Approach

Italy has worked to create an enabling environment for the migrant diaspora, facilitating their contribution to development co-operation and building their capacities. Their approach has been built on the following aspects:

- **Political framework:** The development co-operation law 125/2014 explicitly recognises the role of the diaspora as part of civil society and in “developing shared migration policies”.
- **Mechanisms:** A diaspora representative participates in the National Committee for Development Cooperation (CNCS) and chairs the working group on migration and development.
- **Capacity building:** More than 2 100 diaspora organisations are registered in Italy. Since 2011, Italy has been supporting International Organization for Migration (IOM) training courses for the empowerment of migrant associations.
- **Networking:** In 2017 and 2018, local and national diaspora summits enabled an exchange between migrant associations enhancing their role in the Italian development co-operation system. A more structured Italian Diaspora Forum co-ordinates and serves as the main interlocutor with the government. Diaspora organisations were also involved in the 2019 Italy-Africa Business Week.
- **Development co-operation programmes:** Italy actively includes the diaspora in co-operation programmes to support investments, transfer of savings and employment generation. It also supports partner governments in developing comprehensive approaches towards diaspora engagement.
- **Remittances:** Under the G20 agenda, Italy has helped lower the cost of sending remittances and promoted the financial inclusion of migrants in Italy.

## Results

Results from empowering and mobilising the diaspora include:

- **Increased engagement of diaspora communities in sustainable development.** Italy’s efforts have enabled members of the diaspora to transfer their knowledge and skills, invest in local projects and engage in the promotion of business and local products abroad supporting job creation in partner countries. Italian universities have also supported [research](#) undertaken by diaspora undergraduate students and young researchers. Examples of Italy’s activities include the “Engage the Albanian Diaspora to the Social and Economic development of Albania” and the “Migration as a Resource: Mobilizing the Tunisian Diaspora and Stabilizing Disadvantaged Communities in Tunisia” programmes.
- **Costs for sending remittances from Italy are below the G20 average**, but not yet at the goal of 3%.
- **Senegalese diaspora network in Italy has grown** to include Senegalese diaspora in other European countries.

## Lessons learnt

**National summits can support relationship and network building.** For instance, the [National Diaspora Summits](#) succeeded in strengthening connections between migrant organisations and creating new partnerships.

**Leverage partnerships with local authorities and civil society organisations.** Regions and municipalities bring know-how and investments to communities of a similar geographic scale in partner countries. Often, these territories are connected through migrants’ transnational economic, social and cultural activities. Civil society organisations and diaspora associations can foster these ties through peer-to-peer exchanges and projects. Decentralised co-operation partnerships also provide an opportunity to further promote “shared prosperity”, building on these ties.

**More substantial, long-term and investment-oriented support or start-up financing** has potential to further leverage contributions by the diaspora to sustainable development and linking it with private sector mobilisation, an insight from Italy's engagement in Senegal.

### Further information

Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (2017), *Le diaspore nella cooperazione italiana: Documento per la discussione*, CeSPI, Rome, [https://www.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/SD\\_Documento\\_di\\_discussione\\_LUG17.pdf](https://www.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/SD_Documento_di_discussione_LUG17.pdf).

### OECD resources

OECD, *Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Italy 2019*, Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b1874a7a-en>.

### To learn more about Italy's development co-operation see:

OECD (2021), "Italy", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/37f92091-en>.

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