

MAPPING AND MOBILIZING THE
RWANDAN DIASPORA
IN EUROPE

FOR DEVELOPMENT IN RWANDA:

A POLICY SUMMARY



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PREFACE

Rwanda has significant diaspora communities in various countries across the world and they play an increasingly important role in the development of the country. Realizing the potential of the Rwandan diaspora in the development of the country, the Government of Rwanda wishes to see the diaspora being integrated into national development frameworks. However, to date, a number of factors have hindered the full engagement of the Rwandan diaspora in the country's development, including the Government's limited knowledge about the diaspora communities (their socioeconomic profile, patterns of engagement and other) and a lack of information among the diaspora about development opportunities in Rwanda. To respond to this need, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has supported the Government of Rwanda by coordinating the Rwandan diaspora mapping exercises in four focal European countries, namely Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The findings of these exercises are a contribution to the *Migration Profile of Rwanda* and guide the design of future diaspora engagement programmes to enable the diaspora to participate and engage in the development process of the country. The results from these mapping exercises are presented in the following country-specific reports completed in 2019:

- *Mapping the Rwandan Diaspora in Belgium* (Sean O' Dubhghaill);
- *Mapping the Rwandan Diaspora in Germany* (Katerina Kratzmann);
- *Mapping the Rwandan Diaspora in the Netherlands* (Alain Nkurikiye).
- *Mapping the Rwandan Diaspora in the United Kingdom* (AFFORD);

The present comparative report gives a brief overview of the combined official sociodemographic characteristics of the Rwandan diaspora in Europe, summarizes the aggregate results of the mapping exercises and focuses on policy recommendations for the Government of Rwanda. The mapping exercises and desk-based comparative review of the Rwandan diaspora in four focal European countries provide the evidence base for shaping diaspora engagement programme interventions in Rwanda and guiding the Government of Rwanda's future strategies and policies.

This document is an abridged version of the longer report titled *Mapping and Mobilizing the Rwandan Diaspora in Europe for Development in Rwanda: Comparative Report*.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFFORD	African Foundation for Development
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
ICT	information and communications technology
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MINAFFET	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
NST	National Strategy for Transformation
TVET	technical and vocational education and training



SUMMARY

Rwanda has significant diaspora communities in various countries across the world and they play an increasingly important role in the development of the country. The Government of Rwanda is committed to the mobilization and integration of the Rwandan diaspora. To this purpose, it formed the Diaspora General Directorate in 2008 and devised the Rwanda Diaspora Policy in 2009. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) supported the Government of Rwanda's diaspora mobilization efforts by coordinating mapping exercises of the Rwandan diaspora in four focal European countries: Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The key methodology consisted of four phases: desktop review, quantitative survey, qualitative focus group discussions and key informant interviews, and comparative analysis. The total number of participants was 589, among whom 88 per cent were survey respondents and 12 per cent key informants.

According to official national statistics, 47,357 Rwandans live in the four focal countries in Europe selected for the mapping exercise (Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom). This sizable figure corresponds to 13.7 per cent of the global Rwandan migration stock. Belgium hosts most Rwandans, followed by the United Kingdom, while the Netherlands and Germany host smaller numbers. Rwandans living in these European countries are dispersed across their territories, with pockets concentrated in selected locations. Their profile shows gender balance and that they are a young demographic, with the age bracket 20–40 being the most populous. The majority are either married or single.

Overall, the sociodemographic profile of the participants in the mapping exercises mirrors the official composition of the Rwandan diaspora. Additionally, the respondents are very highly educated, with 68 per cent being educated to degree level, and the vast majority of 69 per cent are employed, of whom 14 per cent are self-employed. Almost one in three participants, representing 74 per cent of the sample, is actively involved in formal or informal sociocultural, professional and other networks, social media networks included.

Among the Rwandan diaspora who participated in the mapping exercises, there is a high level of awareness of government agendas, including agendas to engage with Rwandans abroad, with 70 per cent of them being familiar with the main government policies. However, there is less detailed knowledge about specific programmes or priorities. There is also a very high interest in contributing to development, with 82 per cent expressing their will to engage in the development of the home country.

Rwandan professionals have skills that cover various sectors and they are interested in know-how and skills transfers as well as in volunteering and professional opportunities in Rwanda, especially if these are flexible enough to be tied to their visits to the



country on short- and medium-term bases. With the exception of mining, their skills set matches the Government's technical and vocational education and training (TVET) priority areas such as construction, hospitality, information and communications technology (ICT) and renewable energy. However, respondents mentioned many more sectors of expertise including business, education, financial services, health, management, retail, social care and transport, among others.

Members of the diaspora also contribute to national development through financial contributions: 77 per cent regularly send remittances to Rwanda and 48 per cent – almost half of them – remit on average between EUR 100 and EUR 500. Most remittances are sent to families, with 87 per cent of the participants reporting that remittances sent to families are used for consumption. However, a significant minority of the respondents, 21 per cent, have sent remittances for investment mostly in land, property or family businesses.

There are a number of challenges to the mobilization and integration of the diaspora in national development. Obstacles range from constraining conditions in the home country, including lack of accurate and timely information, limited encouragement, inadequate support, lack of opportunities and administrative hindrances. Lack of time, financial constraints and personal commitments, together with the risk of relocation in the host countries, are additional obstacles that hinder the diaspora's full engagement in development.

Suggestions were made to address obstacles and increase incentives. The main recommendations are:

1. Improve information flows;
2. Harness knowledge and skills transfers;
3. Mobilize remittance flows and investments;
4. Connect the Rwandan communities abroad.

Suggested pathways for targeted interventions are:

1. Set up and pilot new development engagement schemes and extend the existing successful schemes;
2. Develop (online) skills transfer programmes and volunteering/professional pathways;
3. Put in place financial incentives and investment portfolios;
4. Expand outreach activities and support community initiatives.



Specific suggestions for the Government of Rwanda are:

1. Improve mechanisms for communication and dissemination;
2. Extend community outreach efforts;
3. Promote skills transfer, volunteerism and employability;
4. Set up frameworks to facilitate remittance flows and investments;
5. Offer legislative, administrative and practical support;
6. Enhance its diaspora policy.

Given the existing high potential to mobilize the Rwandan diaspora in Europe, the Government of Rwanda would benefit by putting in place information and communication strategies, as well as financial and non-monetary support to capitalize on the existing willingness and readiness of this underutilized resource for development.



1. INTRODUCTION

Rwanda has significant diaspora communities in various countries across the world and they play an increasingly important role in the development of the country through financial transfers, technology, know-how and skills transfers. Realizing that the diaspora is a precious and underutilized resource, the Government of Rwanda is committed to its mobilization and integration into the country's development. The Government's definition of "diaspora" centres around its willingness and readiness to contribute to the development of the country. Rwandan diaspora refers to "all Rwandans who left their country voluntarily or were forced to live in other countries of the world and are willing to contribute to the development of Rwanda" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, 2009:6). There are gaps in existing knowledge on the Rwandan diaspora in terms of its quality and quantity while the Rwandan community abroad lacks credible information on opportunities back home and often is not acquainted with the Government's socioeconomic and political planning.

1.1. INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

The Government of Rwanda has shown a strong political will to mobilize the Rwandan diaspora. It is in that perspective that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MINAFFET) (now known as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation), set up in 2001 a desk in charge of the Rwandan diaspora which was progressively reinforced to become the Diaspora General Directorate in 2008. The Rwandan diplomatic and consular missions have also been given explicit instructions to mobilize the Rwandan diaspora in their respective host countries and have been helping Rwandans abroad to organize themselves by facilitating their acquisition of consular documents and regularization of their stay in their host countries.

As part of its institutional and policy frameworks for diaspora engagement, in 2009 MINAFFET prepared the Rwanda Diaspora Policy with a view to mobilizing and integrating Rwandans in the diaspora into national development and to harnessing communication links within the Rwandan community abroad. This guiding policy framework also sets out how the Government wishes to see the diaspora being integrated into national development frameworks. Existing legal frameworks include the National Vision (to date Vision 2020) and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS 2) for up to 2018. More specific policies include the TVET policy devised by the Ministry of Education, which identifies priority areas for investment such as ICT, construction, hospitality, mining and renewable energy (Ministry of Education, 2015).



Recently, the Government of Rwanda has adopted the National Strategy for Transformation (NST 1) 2017–2024, which will be guided by the new Vision 2050 and the associated 2035 targets (Government of Rwanda, 2017). One of the priorities of NST 1 is to expand services delivered to the diaspora community, increase participation in national development programmes and sensitize the Rwandan diaspora to promote unity and reconciliation.

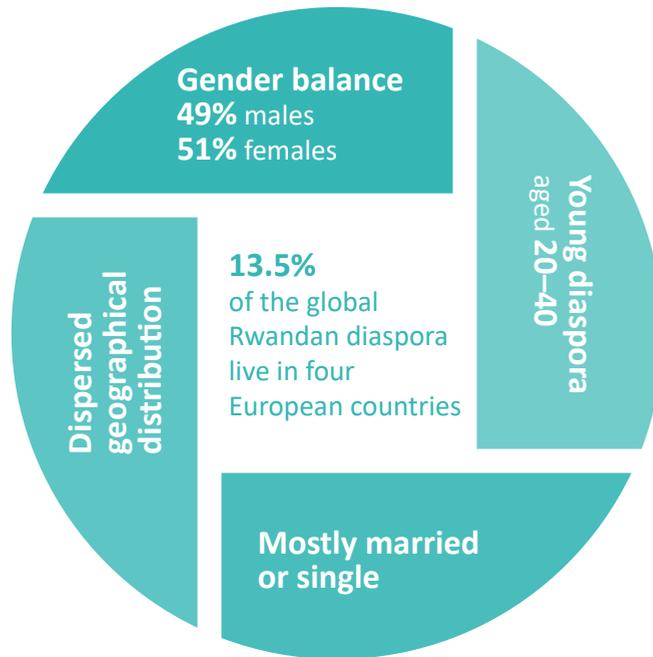
1.2. OVERVIEW OF AIM, METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANTS OF THE DIASPORA MAPPING EXERCISES

Country-specific mapping exercises were conducted in 2018 and 2019 in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom to provide the evidence base for shaping diaspora engagement interventions in Rwanda and guiding future strategies and policies of the Government of Rwanda. The master methodology consisted of four phases: desktop review, quantitative survey, qualitative focus group discussions and key informant interviews, and comparative analysis. The total number of participants was 589, with 521 (88%) survey respondents and 68 (12%) key informants. Gender was slightly skewed in favour of male participants, with 54 per cent males and 46 per cent females. The percentages of respondents in individual countries are as follows: Belgium (38%), Germany (18%), the Netherlands (11%) and the United Kingdom (33%).¹

¹ For more detailed information, see the country-specific reports listed in the References.



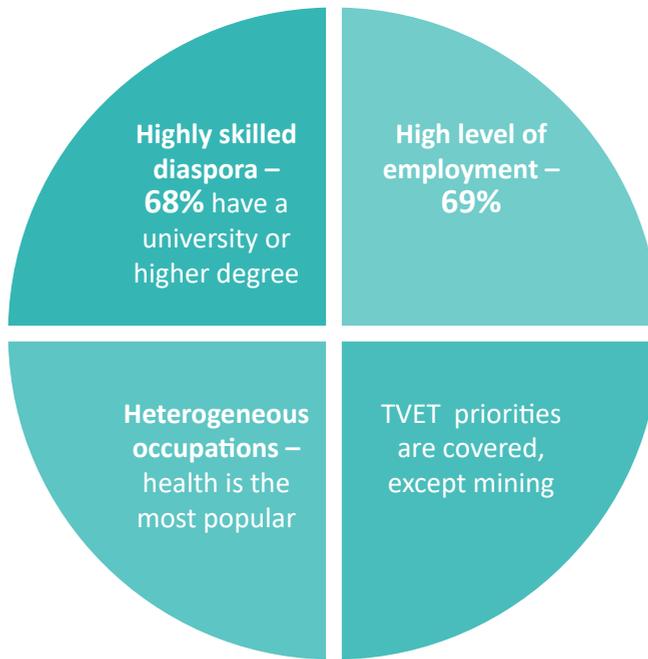
2. PROFILE OF THE RWANDAN DIASPORA IN EUROPE



According to national estimates, the number of Rwandans living in the four focal countries in Europe is 47,357. This sizable figure corresponds to 13.7 per cent of the global Rwandan migration stock estimated by the Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to be 345,800 in 2013 (World Bank, 2013). Of that number, Belgium hosts most Rwandans with 32,137 (9.3%), followed by the United Kingdom, with numbers estimated at around 12,500 (3.6%) and with smaller numbers of 1,575 (0.46%) in the Netherlands and 1,145 (0.34%) in Germany. Rwandans living in the focal European countries are dispersed across their territories, with pockets concentrated in selected locations. They are gender balanced, with 49 per cent (23,205) males and 51 per cent females (24,152), and a young demographic profile, the age bracket 20–40 being the most populous one. The majority are either married or single.



2.1. EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS



Survey participants are very highly educated. Across the four selected countries, 68 per cent of respondents are educated to degree level and above. Among them 41 per cent have an undergraduate qualification and 27 per cent hold a postgraduate qualification or research degree, while 31 per cent have completed a high school degree or vocational training, with higher percentages found in Germany (44%) and the Netherlands (40%) and lower percentages in the United Kingdom (22%) and Belgium (19%). The remaining 1 per cent did not complete high school education or vocational training.

Sixty-nine per cent of respondents are employed, of whom 14 per cent are self-employed. A significant minority of the respondents are students – 22 per cent – of whom 8 per cent are unemployed. Occupational roles are quite heterogeneous. Rwandans in the diaspora work across many sectors: health and social care (21.5%), management (15.5%), hospitality (13%), ICT (11%), construction (10%), agribusiness (9%), financial services (7%), (renewable) energy (7.5%), sales (7%), education (6.5%) and others. Health-related occupations correspond to one fifth of the professions listed. The Government's TVET priority areas – agribusiness, construction, hospitality, ICT, renewable energy – are covered, with the exception of mining.



3. DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

High interest in contributing to national development
82%

High involvement in diaspora networks
74%

High level of connectedness and engagement

Familiar with existing policy priorities in Rwanda
70%

Sectors include but are not limited to TVET

A high percentage of participants, averaging 74 per cent across the focal countries, are actively involved in formal and informal Rwanda diaspora networks in the focal European countries. The main networks are: sociocultural networks that cover political, religious, social and cultural associations; professional networks that consist of occupational, academic and students' groups; and other types that include social media networks.

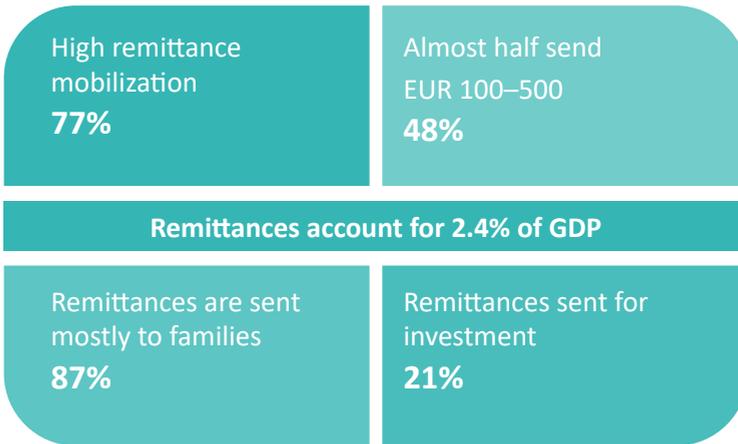
3.1. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TRANSFERS

Among the Rwandan diaspora who participated in the mapping exercises, a high proportion of 70 per cent are familiar with the main government priorities and even more, 82 per cent among them, engage with the development of their country of origin. Rwandan professionals with skills in a range of sectors are interested in taking part in skills transfer and volunteering initiatives in Rwanda, especially if these are flexible enough to be tied to their visits to the country on a short- and medium-term basis (one week to six months). In light of the daily realities of life abroad and given family, professional and mortgage commitments, participants prefer engagements to be flexible and short-term which can be undertaken during visits combined with holidays. Young Rwandans in the diaspora are interested in longer-term appointments for placement experiences or employment.



Sectors of engagement include TVET priority areas of interest to the Government, with the exception of mining. However, participants are interested in engaging in many other sectors such as business, education, financial services, health, management, retail, social care and transport.

3.2. REMITTANCES AND INVESTMENT



The global diaspora's contribution through remittances entering Rwanda amounts to USD 181 million, which represents approximately 2.4 per cent of Rwanda's GDP in 2018 (World Bank, 2018). More than three quarters of survey respondents (77%) send remittances to Rwanda, and almost half of them (48%) send on average between EUR 100 and EUR 500. The amounts range from EUR 10–50 (14%) to EUR 50–100 (18%) and EUR 100–500 (48%) with higher amounts of EUR 500–1,000 (11%) or over EUR 1,000 being sent by a small minority (3–4%). Most remittances (87%) are sent to families for consumption.

An aggregate 21 per cent of individuals have sent remittances for investment, mostly in land, property or business as follows: 30 per cent in Belgium, 25 per cent in Germany, 20 per cent in the United Kingdom and 8 per cent in the Netherlands.



4. COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

Different numerical sizes

Higher levels of commitment to diaspora networks among larger communities

More participants have gained vocational/secondary school degrees in Germany and the Netherlands while more respondents have university degrees in Belgium and the United Kingdom

“Transnational entrepreneurship” in Belgium and willingness to invest in diaspora bond schemes in the United Kingdom

Across the four focal countries, the characteristics of the diasporas vary regarding investment, TVET, community engagement or entrepreneurship. A key difference lies in the size of the Rwandan communities, with the largest constituent in Belgium, smaller ones in Germany and the Netherlands, and an expanding cohort in the United Kingdom. Differences in the size of migrant communities have an impact on the levels of commitment to diaspora networks, which is more prominent in Belgium and the United Kingdom where larger numbers of Rwandans reside. Given that most of the respondents in the German mapping exercise are students, it follows that their engagement in student networks is very high.

Diverse education and employment pathways for Rwandans in the diaspora reveal an additional difference across the focal countries. More participants gained vocational/secondary school degrees in Germany and the Netherlands than those living in Belgium or the United Kingdom, who tend to hold higher (undergraduate and postgraduate) degrees. In the Netherlands, participants cited professional expertise in renewable energy to a higher degree than participants in other countries. In Germany, where a substantial percentage of respondents were students, only a minority had vocational training and limited expertise in TVET sectors.



With regard to involvement in the development of the country of origin, the reports examine different issues that are shaped by host society contexts and diaspora dynamics. In the Netherlands, participants described their willingness to establish micro, small and medium enterprises to foster transnational entrepreneurship for the country's economic development. In Belgium, a diaspora venture capital programme was recommended rather than re-engaging in diaspora mutual funds. Differently, the United Kingdom data showed Rwandans' willingness to invest in diaspora bond schemes piloted by the Central Bank of Rwanda. Lastly, the United Kingdom report highlighted the specific experiences of Rwandan women in the diaspora and intergenerational variations in motivations and practices, as described in the following section.



5. OBSTACLES TO ENGAGEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS OBSTACLES

Challenges to engage in the development of Rwanda can be traced to constraining conditions in host countries – those related to being a diaspora, and most importantly those in the home country. A detailed list is presented below:

Home country	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of accurate, targeted and timely information• Limited encouragement• Unavailability of adequate support• Partial alignment with capabilities and needs• Absence of expression of the necessity to contribute to specific sectors• Lack of flexibility• Administrative barriers
Host country	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time constraints• Limited financial resources• Family commitments• Ongoing mortgage payments
Diaspora	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distance between Rwanda and Europe• Risk of relocation and transition• Lack of programmes in the diaspora promoting knowledge transfer• Lack of opportunity in the diaspora to engage in nation-building projects



5.1. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS OBSTACLES AND INCREASE INCENTIVES

Suggestions were made to the Government of Rwanda and its diplomatic missions, the private and third sectors, and relevant groups in the diaspora to address obstacles and increase incentives. The main proposals are: to improve information flows; to harness knowledge and skills transfers; to mobilize remittance flows and investments; and to connect the Rwandan communities abroad.

<p>Improving information flows</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design online registration platforms (skills, job interests, etc.) • Develop online skills-sharing platforms • Publicize funding, training and organizational development opportunities • Disseminate promotional campaigns around opportunities back home targeted at different groups
<p>Harnessing knowledge and skills transfers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify priority skills for matching with Rwandan students and professionals • Devise a mentoring platform to capitalize upon diaspora talent • Develop targeted campaigns for recruitment
<p>Mobilizing remittances and investments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate legislative, administrative and practical support • Offer monetary assistance • Foster and formalize transnational entrepreneurship • Develop online resources to guide investment across sectors • Encourage companies looking to invest or extend their operations in Rwanda to work with diaspora entrepreneurs • Implement initiatives to reduce remittance transfer costs • Support inward investment and taxation
<p>Connecting the Rwandan communities abroad</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put diaspora members in touch with each other • Extend current community outreach in the diaspora • Showcase diaspora talent, investors and entrepreneurs • Foster investment and trade contacts



5.2. STRUCTURED PATHWAYS FOR TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

Participants identified structured pathways for targeted interventions. Among them there are suggestions for: setting up and piloting new engagement schemes or extending existing successful ones such as the creation of a job brokerage service targeting Rwandans abroad or of a pilot programme leading to the development of a diaspora venture capital programme, to promote partnerships between investors and individuals with technical know-how; developing (online) skills transfer programmes; putting in place financial initiatives; and fostering community activities.

Engagement schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop social, financial and intellectual diaspora engagement schemes targeted at different groups• Set up a pilot programme leading to the development of a diaspora venture capital programme• Replicate and where possible extend existing models of good practice• Establish a job brokerage service targeting Rwandans abroad
Skills transfers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share skills through e-learning and online mentoring• Set up a pilot project examining the feasibility of virtual skills transfers• Establish structured volunteering pathways such as a national diaspora volunteering service
Financial initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement initiatives to reduce remittance transfer costs• Develop a range of investment products• Implement remunerated skills-sharing pathways• Encourage crowdsourcing and microfinancing investment projects• Set up incentives such as tax relief or access to credit
Community mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organize community events outside the main cities• Establish Rwandan professional, student and alumni networks• Set up Kinyarwanda language teaching for young Rwandans in the diaspora



5.3. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA

Participants are aware that the Government of Rwanda and its diplomatic missions in Europe are interested in mobilizing and integrating the diaspora into the development of the country. They recommended that the Government of Rwanda improve mechanisms for communication and dissemination; expand its outreach and engagement; promote skills transfer, volunteerism and employability; create frameworks to facilitate remittance flows and investment; offer legislative, administrative and practical support; and revise its diaspora policy.

<p>Improve communication and dissemination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure transfer of accurate information • Design online registration platforms to identify skills and job interests • Extend communication efforts, with targeted campaigns for recruitment of Rwandan professionals in priority TVET sectors • Promote and market funding and investment opportunities • Publicize funding, training and organizational development opportunities
<p>Improve community outreach and engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop awareness campaigns on opportunities back home • Improve diplomatic missions' outreach programmes • Facilitate investment and trade contacts • Diplomatic missions to act as a vehicle for marketing investment and financial opportunities
<p>Establish structured skills transfer, volunteerism and employment pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement remunerated skills-sharing opportunities • Invest in (virtual) skills-sharing curricula, exercises and programmes • Establish structured volunteering pathways
<p>Develop schemes to facilitate remittance flows and investments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up initiatives to reduce remittance transfer costs • Develop a range of investment products • Implement targeted schemes to aid engagement



Offer legislative and practical support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide legislative, administrative and practical support• Designate government representatives who will be responsible for supporting diaspora development activities
Revise policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revise and enhance the diaspora policy



6. CONCLUSION

The mapping exercises conducted in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have provided the missing knowledge about the Rwandan diaspora communities in Europe and identified the information that the diaspora needs from the Government of Rwanda in order to become more involved in development opportunities in Rwanda.

There is high potential to mobilize and integrate the Rwandan diaspora into the economic and sociocultural development of the country of origin through existing and ongoing financial and skill-based transfers. Given the high level of educational attainment and professional expertise of the Rwandan diaspora in the four focal countries, the Government of Rwanda would benefit from mobilizing the diaspora to offer not only knowledge and skills transfers focused on the TVET priorities but also from incorporating a more diversified range of sectors of involvement as well as from targeting specific subgroups and differential preferences across host countries.

To overcome obstacles in engagement, the Government of Rwanda would need to work on its information and communication strategies and offer different kinds of monetary and non-monetary support to the Rwandan diaspora in Europe. In this way, it will be able to capitalize on the expertise and willingness to contribute to the national development of this underutilized resource.



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Belgium
partner in development