



DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT Best Practices Compendium



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Introduction

At the 13th EU-India Summit in 2016, leaders established the **EU-India Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility (CAMM)** as a framework for cooperation outlining objectives, recommendations, and actions to be undertaken on migration management. Recognising the significant role of diasporas and the impact of migration on development, the EU-India CAMM document highlights the importance of: “harnessing the contribution of migrants...[for] the development of countries of origin and countries of destination”.

This compendium brief offers a collection of best practices undertaken by the Government of India (GoI) and at the European Union (EU)-level by Indian diaspora associations, Indian Embassies, and EU member state authorities to engage with Indian diaspora living in Europe. This compendium brief was developed to support this CAMM commitment under the EU-India Cooperation and Dialogue on Migration and Mobility project. The project aims to operationalize EU support for better management of mobility and legal migration between the EU and India, as well as to prevent and address the challenges related to irregular migratory flows.¹

The first section of the compendium brief includes a list of best practices in diaspora engagement, collated by the Indian Centre for Migration (ICM) to provide context on the GoI's ongoing initiatives. These unique initiatives are innovative and ensures effective engagement with the Indian diaspora abroad. The second section summarizes the findings from a desk review of relevant publications on Indian diaspora engagement in the EU. The desk review conducted for the second section included conjoint studies from Ireland² and Germany³. The information attained through the desk review was corroborated through interviews with subject matter experts and key stakeholders who were directly involved with Indian diaspora engagement in European countries.

1. The CDMM project is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

2. ICMPD. (November 11, 2020). Indian Diaspora in Ireland. Available [here](#).

3. ICMPD. (2021). Indian Diaspora in Germany. Available [here](#)



SECTION 1

Best Practices from India



Section 1: Best Practices from India

India is a pioneer in recognizing the importance and valuable contributions of its 32 million-strong Indian community abroad⁴. This includes 13.4 million Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and 18.6 million Overseas citizens of India (OCIs)⁵. Hosting more than two million Indians migrants⁶, EU countries are an important destinations for Indians. The Indian diaspora, especially in the EU, is a heterogeneous community, and as such, requires distinct approaches to strengthen their engagement with India.

In addition to family reunification, contemporary emigration flows from India to the EU include highly skilled professionals, unskilled and semi-skilled workers, and students with tertiary and higher educational qualifications. As these individuals are a significant source of knowledge and expertise, the Government of India (GoI) has been revising its policies to enable diasporas to contribute to India's socio-economic development.



Spotlight: Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Overseas Indians Day)

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is the GoI's flagship event for Indian diaspora. It is hosted every two years on January 9th to mark the contributions of the Indian community abroad in the development of India. January 9th was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion because it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi (diaspora member), returned to India from South Africa, led India's freedom struggle, and changed the lives of Indians forever.

Theme-based PBD conferences are also hosted during the years between the PBD events, with participation from overseas diaspora experts, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders. These conventions provide a platform to the overseas Indian community so they may engage with the GoI and its Indian-based stakeholders for mutually beneficial activities.

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) also organizes Regional Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (RPBD) events to reach out to Indian diasporas, who cannot attend the main biennial event in India. The RPBDs were initiated in response to a significant demand to host these events regionally. Since launching, the RPBDs have received enthusiastic support from the Indian diaspora and local governments and have been highly successful.

4. MEA, http://mea.gov.in/images/attach/NRIs-and-PIOs_1.pdf

5. The Government of India Act, 1935 defined a Person of Indian Origin (PIO) as a person who has held an Indian passport at any time or whose parents/ grandparents were born in India and are permanently resident there or who is a spouse of a citizen of India. The Citizenship Amendment bill in 2015, withdrew the PIO scheme, and all PIOs were deemed to be Overseas Citizens of India (OCI). Non-Resident Indians (NRI), as per India's Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999, are Indian citizens holding an Indian passport living and/or working in another country. An individual is also considered to have NRI status if his/her stay in India lasted less than 182 days in the preceding financial year.

6. MEA, <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/EthnicityandDiasporicIdentity.pdf>, page 5

The following list of diaspora engagement initiatives led by the Gol, were selected due to their success as sustainable and mutually beneficial programmes.

A. FELLOWSHIP INITIATIVES

Many research programmes, scholarships and fellowships have been introduced by the Gol to allow overseas Indian scientists and academics to work in publicly funded Indian institutions and universities. Other programmes help young diasporas enroll in Indian universities.

- › **Ramanujan Fellowship**⁷: This fellowship provides attractive opportunities to Indian researchers abroad who are below of 40 years of age, to work in the areas of science, engineering, and medicine.

- › **Ramalingaswami Re-entry Fellowship**⁷: This program encourages Indian scientists, interested in returning to India, to pursue research in life sciences, modern biology, biotechnology, and other related areas.

- › **Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children (SPDC)**: This programme was launched to make higher education in Indian universities/institutions more accessible to young diaspora members and to promote India as a center for higher education. Scholarships are offered for undergraduate courses at applicable Indian universities/institutions.

B. RESEARCH INITIATIVES

Similarly, research schemes, scholarships and fellowships have been introduced by the Gol to encourage researchers to contribute and engage with research in life sciences, modern biology, biotechnology, and other related areas.

- › **Biomedical Research Career Programme (BRCP)**⁷: This program is open to all eligible Indian researchers who wish to establish their research and academic careers in basic biomedicine or clinical and public health, in India.

- › **Scientists/Technologists of Indian Origin (STIO) in Indian Research Laboratory**⁷: There is a provision to appoint Scientists/Technologists of Indian Origin (STIO) on a contractual basis at Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) laboratories so they may contribute to research in their areas of expertise.

- › **Senior Research Associateship (SRA) (Scientist's Pool Scheme)**⁷: This scheme provides temporary placements to highly qualified Indian scientists abroad, enabling them to do research/teaching in India while looking for regular employment opportunities.

- › **Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN)**⁸: This is a higher education program aimed at leveraging the talent pool of Indian scientists and entrepreneurs abroad.

- › **Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) Summit**⁹: This summit is a collaborative initiative to create an ecosystem of knowledge and innovation in India through global outreach.

- › **Pravasi Bharatiya Academic and Scientific Sampark (PRABHASS)**⁹: This interactive digital platform engages the global Indian science and technology community to address India's societal challenges.

- › **Visiting Advanced Joint Research (VAJRA) Faculty Scheme**¹⁰: This scheme aims to bring overseas Indian scientists and academics to India to work in publicly funded institutions and universities through time-limited contracts.

7. PIB, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1657418>

8. PIB, <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=132115>

9. PIB, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1683029>

10. PIB, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1657418>

C. SOCIO-CULTURAL AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

These programmes encourage students and young professionals to learn about India and its development.

- › **The Know India Programme (KIP)¹¹**: Over a three-week orientation programme, the KIP promotes awareness among Indian diasporas between 18-30 years of age, about different facets of life in India and national progress made across various fields (e.g., economic, industrial, education, science and technology, communication and information technology, and culture).
- › **Bharat Ko Janiye (BKJ)¹¹**: This educational programme seeks to strengthen engagement with young Indians abroad. An online 'Bharat ko Janiye' (BKJ) Quiz is organised for those between the ages of 18-35 as a part of this program, to teach them about India.
- › **Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana**: This pilgrimage programme was started in association with the Indian Railway Catering & Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) for OCIs between 45-60 years of age, to visit India on an organized pilgrimage, paid for by the GoI, to expose them to the various faiths in India.
- › **Promotion of Cultural Ties with Diaspora (PCTD)**: The PCTD supports the diaspora in organizing cultural events displaying Indian culture, new initiatives and developments of modern India. The scheme aims to nourish and strengthen the cultural bonds between India and its diaspora. The projected outcome of the scheme is to reinforce the cultural identity of OCIs. Through the PCTD, the GoI releases grants to the Indian missions abroad, which then work together with diaspora associations to organise relevant events.



Spotlight: Overseas Citizen of India Card

A registered Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) is granted multiple entries, multiple-purpose, and life-long visas to visit India, and is exempt from registration requirements with Foreign Registration Officers. An OCI Card holder is eligible to the same entitlements as NRIs in economic, financial, and educational fields, with the exception of matters relating to the acquisition of agricultural or plantation properties.

D. DIASPORA WELFARE PROGRAMS

The GoI has launched programs for improving the welfare of Indian diaspora. These programs also facilitate improved communication between diasporas with their communities of origin in India.

- › **Global Pravasi RISHTA Portal¹²**: This is an online portal to connect diasporas (NRIs and OCIs) with the GoI through Indian Embassies and Consulates. It is a two-way communication channel between the GoI and Indian diasporas, allowing for the dissemination of information about government programmes for Indian diasporas. The portal and mobile app were launched on December 30th, 2020.
- › **MEA-State Outreach Conferences¹³**: The Ministry of External Affairs holds conferences with state governments to facilitate an in-depth dialogue to improve welfare and protection of Indian diaspora. These events are named as 'Videsh Sampark'.
- › **OCI enrolment to National Pension Scheme¹⁴**: OCIs are permitted to enroll in the national pension scheme, in accordance with their eligibility to invest under the provisions of the Pension Fund Regulatory & Development Authority Act.

11. MEA, http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/33569_MEA_annual_Report.pdf pg.210

12. MEA, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1687278>

13. MEA, https://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/33569_MEA_annual_Report.pdf pg.210

14. PIB, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1589523>



SECTION 2

Best Practices in the EU

*(by Indian diaspora associations, Indian Embassies,
and EU member state authorities)*



Section 2- Best Practices in the EU

(by Indian diaspora associations, Indian Embassies, and EU member state authorities)

CASE STUDY 1: IRELAND

Ireland has long been a country of emigration. Recognizing its diaspora as one of its greatest resources, the Irish government has implemented a number of diverse policies and initiatives to support the Irish community as well as other diaspora groups around the globe. For example, the Back for Business programme provides targeted support to Irish emigrants seeking to relocate and establish their own businesses in Ireland.

Now being also a land of immigration, the Government of Ireland has established the Communities Integration Fund to directly support local organisations promoting integration and social inclusion of the country's diverse immigrant populations.



Spotlight: Communities Integration Fund for diaspora community in Ireland

The Communities Integration Fund was established to support Ireland-based organisations, including registered diaspora groups, in implementing integration and anti-discrimination projects in their local communities. In 2021, each successful organisation received up to €5,000 for their project. The Fund, which aligns to the priorities specified in the government's Migrant Integration Strategy, acts as an innovative and replicable initiative across other CoDs that directly finances efforts in the field of social inclusion for migrant populations.

Through the expansion of its commercial-focused mandate, the Ireland-India Business Association (IIBA) has also emerged as an innovative example of a diaspora business association strategically leveraging its networks to improve the outcomes for Irish and Indian businesses and individuals alike. The IIBA provides several key programmes and services, including the coordination of relevant events, webinars and research, to provide learning and leadership to its membership. In recent years, the IIBA's membership has grown extensively and has diversified, cementing its position as a 'go-to' association for both private and non-private members.

The IIBA has established various Working Groups. The IIBA's Education Working Group, for example, provides educational resources to Indian students, recent graduates and employers. The Agri Business-Agri Food Working Group is another example, promoting bilateral trade and bridging key stakeholders in the agricultural sectors across Ireland and India.

Innovative Characteristics:

- › The IIBA is actively expanding its membership to include non-private sector members. This includes representatives from Irish universities, chartered banks, legal firms and government agencies. In doing so, the IIBA has benefited from a variety of sponsorships and partnerships that have promoted the expanding objectives of the association.
- › The IIBA provides ongoing support and coaching to newer businesses and members of India's diaspora who are unfamiliar with the business market or the activities and portfolios of the IIBA. This includes second and third generation Indians seeking to explore new business opportunities as well as Indian graduate students entering the job market in Ireland.

- › Through its various Working Groups, the IIBA has established a collaborative model to address the specific interests and needs of diaspora members and members of the business community. This targeted approach increases the vested interest of the diverse range of IIBA members and streamlines their expertise across specific industries such as ICT, aviation and tourism.
- › The Education Working Group has determined its strategic objectives with ongoing consultation from relevant stakeholders, including university administrators and students. By leveraging the institutional expertise of Working Group members, the group provides relevant and useful resources for Indian students as well as for companies seeking to recruit recent graduates.
- › The IIBA, has developed and shared a guide for Indian students and employers on the changes made to the Stamp 1G work permit and organized panel discussions with graduates about the Irish job market.
- › The IIBA has leveraged its network to promote socio-cultural and philanthropic initiatives led by members (e.g., fundraising for the procurement of oxygen concentrators in India and webinars on COVID-19 response efforts, including a presentation from the HOPE Hospital in Kolkata).

Replicable Practices Drawn from the IIBA:

- › The Working Group model can support business associations in expanding and tailoring their activities across a variety of sectoral and industry areas, while encouraging new and unconventional members to join (i.e., non-private sector members). As an innovative and efficient model applicable to a variety of diaspora groups, Working Groups leverage specific areas of expertise and relevant contacts to address barriers faced by their target beneficiaries. This model allows for more targeted communication and collaboration between representatives of the Working Group and external groups and experts.
- › Associations can leverage their networks and resources to support ad hoc integration and socio-economic development initiatives alongside their broader commercial activities. The networks and activities of business associations, with diverse scopes, can be both mobilized and capitalised across other EU contexts to support emergent local needs as well as those in their country of origin.
- › Business associations are leaders in connecting members of the diaspora to market and employment opportunities. Business associations can actively support the integration of certain diaspora sub-groups, such as graduating students, young professionals or female entrepreneurs. As a resourceful channel, business associations across EU member states can act as focal points to promote and develop resources and programming targeting specific sub-groups.

CASE STUDY 2: GERMANY

Germany is an increasingly popular destination for Indian students who have an interest in studying in Europe. Between 2019-2020, the number of Indian students enrolling in German universities increased by 21 per cent, making Indians the 2nd largest group of international students in Germany¹⁵. German universities, namely at the post-graduate level, offer English-language technical programs that are of interest to these students. Programs are also more affordable for Indian students, when compared to other universities across the EU. The influx of Indian students led to the emergence of multiple Indian Student Associations (ISAs). To support the coordination efforts within and across the ISAs, the Cultural Wing of the Indian Embassy in Berlin launched an online portal and network to connect ISAs under an umbrella structure called Indian Students in Germany (ISG).

The ISG serves as a resource hub for information related to visas, housing, social integration, employment, and healthcare, for Indian students through the following methods:

- › Through its Facebook page, the ISG team provides relevant updates and information.
- › Leveraging existing networks, the ISG team connects Indian students with employment opportunities in India and Germany.
- › Through its registration portal, the ISG connects students with emergency contacts in Germany. The ISG, as a network of 16 ISAs, represents a valuable opportunity to engage with students and young professionals that are highly motivated to contribute to their communities in Germany and to support development in India.

Innovative Characteristics of the ISAs and ISG:

- › The flexible and inexpensive nature of ISA membership suits the needs of university students. ISAs have grown, in part because of this structure, beyond Indian student members to include German students and other international students. This further strengthens networks and the integration of Indian students within host societies.
- › ISAs are inherently part of stable institutions, especially those that are formally connected to the ISG. Their linkages to universities and the Indian Embassy grants students access to valuable professional networks in India and Germany. These institutions also participate in ISA advisory boards. This enables smoother transition processes between outgoing and incoming ISA student leaders.
- › Unlike many Indian diaspora organisations, ISAs and the ISG have heterogeneous membership bases. This allows for enhanced connection to, and engagement with, the Indian diaspora across Indian sub-cultural and sub-ethnic groups.
- › The ISG offers a 1,000 euro scholarship - the annual Sarojini Naidu-Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Award - to individuals or organisations who make notable contributions to the integration of Indians in Germany. This of course promotes integration efforts but also indirectly promotes student involvement to support these initiatives.
- › ISAs have previously secured support for members pursuing innovative projects through their respective associations. For example, ISA leaders in Heidelberg and Darmstadt contributed to development projects in India. Access to relevant institutions, such as the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce, to provide guidance or connections is helpful to these students.

15. DAAD. (October 13, 2020). Germany welcomes Record Number of Indian Students. [Press Release]. <https://www.daad.in/en/2020/10/13/germany-welcomes-record-number-of-indian-students/>

Replicable Practices drawn from the ISAs and ISG:

- › Coordinating with ISAs to engage with Indian students and their local diaspora networks is a replicable strategy because ISAs already exist in several countries across Europe. These associations are also easily searchable online because they often have their own social media pages and/or websites.
- › The online portal model could be adopted in many European countries because of the existence of Indian embassies or consular offices in these countries. Sharing of lessons learned to launch and maintain a similar initiative would be relatively efficient between these offices given the established communication channels.
- › Another alternative would be to take advantage of the ISG platform's registration function for Indian students that has already expanded to include Indian students from other European countries. With support from other embassies, this platform could be used to map Indian students across Europe. Doing so would make it easier to connect ISAs in different countries to create a transnational, accessible network.
- › Providing access to professional networks through ISAs can be achieved in other contexts. With support from host universities, Indian-led businesses, municipal offices, and/or consular offices, students can be connected with valuable employment opportunities in Europe and India. This is especially valuable for Indian students who study abroad and hope to work in India after graduation.

Key Recommendations

- ⇨ The highly relevant programmes for young professionals, researchers, academics and prospective students offered by the GOI, can benefit from further advertising through targeted dissemination channels, including social media and online portals (Pravasi Global Rishta, ISG), gatherings and events. For instance, Global Rishta Portal is an online portal that connects Indian diaspora with GOI through Indian missions abroad.
- ⇨ Diplomatic missions and diaspora associations in host countries benefit from established channels of communication to regularly exchange information. Through such channels, governments (GOI, EU/EU Member States) can easily share available support initiatives for diaspora associations (e.g., Irish Communities Integration Fund) in host countries. These information channels can also help government stakeholders improve their awareness of the numerous transnational activities organized by diaspora associations.
- ⇨ EU Member States and India may further support Indian business and student associations, including financially (through initiatives such as integration funds), to improve their diaspora engagement and integration programmes. This could benefit both the Member State and India. Capacity building efforts to establish the necessary governance frameworks (within such entities) would also enable more efficient and effective delivery of programmes.
- ⇨ Business and student associations have demonstrated common objectives in programmes targeting students and young professionals. EU and Indian government stakeholders can use their existing connections to these associations to facilitate collaboration. This would support employment and integration into host societies, information sharing between all stakeholders, and expand professional networks within and between countries.
- ⇨ Indian students are an increasingly important diaspora group living across the EU. However, these students are not always equipped with the necessary knowledge and information about work permit regulations. As such, they may experience additional barriers to their integration in the host country. Initiatives similar to the ISG to ensure that applicable conditions, and guidance from members of the broader diaspora network, are useful to the incoming students.
- ⇨ Diaspora associations, particularly those with transnational chapters or affiliated groups, can act as catalysts between the host EU Member State and India. Collaborating with these associations would be beneficial because they can efficiently leverage expansive networks for business development between the two countries. They can also directly inform about the effects of diaspora engagement policies and practices relating to business and investments within and between these countries.

Conclusion

The EU-India CAMM recognizes the importance of promoting diaspora engagement to maximize Indian diasporas' socio-economic contributions to India and within their respective EU host societies. This compendium brief highlights some notable examples of GOI diaspora engagement initiatives and replicable practices drawn from case studies in Ireland and Germany that could advance the CAMM objectives.

More in-depth discussions with EU-based diaspora organisations and relevant subject matter experts would better guide the expansion, reform, and creation of engagement initiatives. Involving these diaspora members and considering the proposed opportunities above would further contribute to the joint CAMM development goals.



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