



Voices of the Diaspora in Europe – Between Heritage and Future

Summary of the Report Congofuturism 2025

Congofuturism: Experiences of Congolese in Belgium, France, and Germany

1. Introduction

The specific realities of Congolese Europeans have so far received little research attention. Comparative studies of Congolese experiences across several European countries are almost absent. This study explores the migration biographies, cultural practices, and political dimensions of the Congolese diaspora in Belgium, France, and Germany.

In all three countries, the diaspora lives predominantly in cities, an important factor for integration and identity-building.

- **Belgium:** Congolese are the largest community of sub-Saharan African origin (around **100,000** people)¹.
- **France:** Congolese form one of the larger African-origin groups (around **130,000** people)².
- **Germany:** about **25,000** people, among the oldest sub-Saharan communities³.

The Democratic Republic of Congo & Congofuturism

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) is rich in people, resources, and culture. For many in the diaspora, it represents both a place of origin and a vision of the future.

The term “Congofuturism” describes the idea of a self-determined Congolese future shaped by technology, creativity, and diasporic solidarity.

Methodology

The findings are based on the Congofuturism Conference 2025 in Brussels with participants from Belgium, France, Germany, and the DR Congo. The event was supported by the Africa Museum Tervuren.

2. Multidimensional Identities: Living Between Origin and Present

Identities in the Congolese diaspora are hybrid and dynamic. Many feel Congolese, or both Congolese and European, not as a contradiction, but as a strength. This dual belonging offers new perspectives, creates bridges between cultures, but also carries the feeling of never fully belonging.

Language, culture, and family values of DR Congo, as well as values and social norms of European countries, form the foundation of identity and belonging. Lingala, elevated by music and pop culture into a form of soft power, conveys pride, collective belonging, and serves as a bridge across borders.

A clear demand toward the Congolese state is the stronger promotion of national languages in education, media, and digital spaces, to reduce colonial language dependency.

A strong political awareness is evident, especially among the second generation. Migration is not perceived as rupture, but as a new form of connection to the DR Congo, linked to the responsibility of helping to shape its future.

The diaspora combines strong cultural ties and a shared sense of responsibility with diversity shaped by different national contexts. Commonalities and overlapping biographies provide potential for unity, if differences are acknowledged and constructively included.

1 <https://www.justicepaix.be/La-diaspora-belgo-DR-Congolaise-et-la-Cooperation-belge-au-developpement-une/Herkunft>. Statbel. (2025)

2 INSEE (2023), INED (2021)

3 Bundesministerium für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) (2022)

3. Congofuturism & Technology Engagement: Shaping the Future

Congofuturism means not copying Western models but developing distinct Congolese paths. Technology is seen as a key tool not only for the economy and infrastructure, but also for culture, education, and self-determination.

Digital tools such as artificial intelligence, social media, and virtual reality open up new possibilities to retell history, share knowledge, and create creative spaces.

The DR Congo's most important resource is its youth. Education, digital skills, and cultural self-confidence are seen as the foundation of a self-determined, technologically innovative society.

4. Impact Made in Diaspora: From Supporters to Co-creators

The study shows clearly: the diaspora is not "absent," but highly engaged. Over 70% of respondents can imagine returning – permanently, temporarily, or through investments and digital exchange. Many already support families and projects locally but call for stronger structures and networks to achieve broader impact.

Three priority areas were identified:

- **Social impact:** education, health, and social security.
- **Economic impact:** promotion of local production and jobs, especially in agriculture.
- **Political impact:** organizing as a collective voice to make the DR Congo more visible internationally.

Impact does not come from individual money transfers alone but from strategic, collective action. Participants called for structures such as diaspora councils, digital platforms, and local partnerships to pool efforts.

5. Conclusion

The diaspora is more than a community of remembrance – it is an actor between heritage and future. It holds significant social, economic, and political capital.

- Identities are hybrid and flexible.
- Language, culture, and family remain anchors – especially important for younger generations.
- Political awareness and responsibility are strong – access to knowledge is key.
- Technology, education, and cultural awareness are seen as pillars of a self-determined future.
- Engagement is high but requires structures and political recognition. What counts is not the "big leap," but a continuous, joint effort.

Thus, the diaspora can become a decisive driver and bridge-builder for a just and self-determined DR Congo.

Outlook

- Strengthen diaspora networks and educational partnerships.
- Enable return and flexible participation.
- Integrate the diaspora more strongly into development processes both in Europe and DR Congo.

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Photo: Some participants of the Congofuturism Conference at the AfricaMuseum