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GUIDELINES FOR THE SUPPORT OF NEW OR YOUNG ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL DIASPORAS



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This report has been produced by

CONNECTS-UK (CONNecting European Communities Through Sciences in the UK)

info@connects-uk.org

www.connects-uk.org.uk

Coordinator

Polonium Foundation

Contributors

AISUK (Association of Italian Scientists in the United Kingdom)

DANinUK (Dutch Academic Network in the United Kingdom)

FERN (French Education & Research Network in the United Kingdom)

Finnish Science Society in the United Kingdom

VTIS (Slovenians educated abroad)

PARSUK (Portuguese association of researchers and students in the United Kingdom)

Polonium Foundation

SRUK/CERU (Society of Spanish Researchers in the United Kingdom)

Graphic Design

Sara Alvira de Celis

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INDEX

Why To Create a Scientific Diaspora?	2
What are the benefits of being part of a Scientific Diaspora Community in the UK?	3
How to set up a Scientific Diaspora Society?	4
How to grow your Society network?	5
How to find funding for establishing and running a Society in the UK?	6
What are the expected challenges for the new diasporas Society?	7
What are the key activities/actions a Society can focus on?	8

Introduction

Scientific Diasporas play a vital role in fostering international collaboration and professional development. However, setting up these organisations is often challenging with a plethora of unknown questions. It requires substantial effort in creating a sense of community, defining clear objectives, securing funding, and navigating legal and organisational structures. Through this guide, CONNECTS-UK offers practical advice to help overcome these barriers, making it easier for new or young diasporas to thrive and contribute to stronger EU-UK scientific relations.



Why to create a Scientific Diaspora Society?

Scientific Diaspora Societies represent a unique population of migrant scientists and professionals, whose background is diverse due to their nationality, culture and experiences. Nevertheless, there are common motivations that drive Scientific Diaspora in creating a society.

- **Community Building and Networking:**
 - Common goal is to bring together researchers, academics, and graduate students who share a common cultural background or nationality.
 - To provide platforms for networking, sharing experiences, and establishing connections within the diaspora community.
- **Collaboration and Scientific Exchange:**
 - Promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing between researchers from their home country and the UK.
 - To facilitate joint research projects, knowledge exchange, and partnerships between institutions.
- **Supporting Researchers Abroad:**
 - To support researchers' mobility by providing resources, mentorship, and advice.
 - To help researchers navigate challenges related to living and working abroad.

- To create a sense of belonging and support for individuals in foreign cultures.
- **Advocacy and Policy Influence:**
 - To actively advise the home country R&D+i system based on international experiences.
 - To showcase excellence in research and aims to influence science and education policies.
 - To establish a legal entity with a potential role in advocacy.

For many scientific diasporas in the UK, the push to create an official organisation was Brexit, and the uncertainties it has brought. This highlights how a political or economic situation in a given country brings diasporas together.

In summary, Scientific Diaspora Societies foster collaboration, provide support, and contribute to the advancement of science and research within their respective diaspora communities.

What are the benefits of being part of a Scientific Diaspora Community in the UK?



Being part of a scientific diaspora community in the UK, offers a wealth of benefits that cater to both **personal and professional growth**. Members become part of a vibrant community that serves as a platform for developing and sharing ideas, interests, and initiatives, like organising events or engaging in policy making. As a collective, you can make your voice heard, and have more opportunities for discussions at a high impact level. At the same time, it provides more accessible contact for embassies and other organisations to the researchers of specific communities.

Volunteers can acquire transferable **skills**, collaborate with colleagues across various research disciplines, and maintain connections with their home country's scientific system through mobility opportunities. They can also **disseminate their research**, participate in association events, and benefit from travel grants, a mentorship scheme, and awards for senior researchers. Most importantly, these interactions lead to enhancement of **personal and professional networks**.

Becoming part of a Scientific Diaspora Community brings you also closer to the wider Diaspora Community in the UK, especially through active connection with your local Embassy

and cultural associations. Being part of a credible collective provides a platform for **advocacy** for scientific collaboration and positive impact in their home countries.

Being a member of Scientific Diaspora Society further promotes collaboration with other initiatives, such as Native Scientists and other European associations under the EU-funded CONNECTS-UK project exemplifies its commitment to fostering scientific collaboration between the EU and the UK. This **pan-European platform**, led by EU researchers in the UK, is pivotal in building a supportive and interconnected scientific community.



How to set up a Scientific Diaspora Society?

Learning about the initial steps and examples of legal approaches is a valuable way to establish and organise your society.

- Establishing a Scientific Diaspora Society in the UK is a multifaceted process that begins with gathering a group of like-minded individuals **committed** to the cause. It's crucial to foster a sense of community and trust among potential members, as this human connection is the bedrock of any successful organisation. Utilising every available channel, such as embassies, university associations, and newsletters, is key to rallying a foundational group.
- Once assembled, the society must articulate its initial **objectives and priorities**, tailoring them to the specific needs and aspirations of the community it represents. These can include creation of a network or promoting collaboration. This step is vital as it sets the direction for the society's future endeavours.
- The formation of a dedicated **working group** is the next critical step. This grassroots team, guided by organisations like CONNECTS-UK, will need clear direction and a fair distribution of tasks that align with each member's expertise and experience.
- Writing the **key documents** (constitution/statutes, bylaws, guidance documents and organisational structure), with insights from similar entities, will provide a robust framework for the society. This includes defining roles within a board of directors, team leaders for different activities (communications, research, policy, events).
- Simultaneously, efforts to secure **funding** should be made through local resources, embassies, and home country institutions, including charities. This financial support is essential for the society's sustainability.

- Finally, the society must decide on the type of **legal entity and geographic jurisdiction** (either in the UK or your home country). In the UK, society can be registered, for example, as a [Private Limited Company by guarantee](#). This is followed by preparation of the [Articles of Association](#), which outline the rules governing the society. The society can also be registered in your home country.
- **Membership** criteria based on residency, nationality, or professional qualifications must be established, and proactive promotion of the association is necessary to attract members and establish its presence in the scientific community.
- Finally, the Society is a **brand**. Think about the Logo and Society representation within social media channels.

How to grow your Society network?



To expand your Scientific Diaspora Society's network, it's essential to harness the interpersonal and negotiation **skills** of your members to lead and engage effectively. Building a **team spirit** through in-person events is a great way to foster connections. Initially, word of mouth is a powerful tool for promoting activities, which can later be supplemented by strong social media presence and newsletters.

Offering compelling **activities** that resonate with your community's interests, such as science communication training or career development opportunities, will attract and retain members. Regular events, webinars, and workshops will not only engage current members but also attract new ones. Maintaining **ties** with your home country allows potential members to become familiar with the diaspora before they even arrive.

For broader outreach, utilise the **networks** of founding members, alumni associations, and maintain a relationship with entities like your Embassy. Collaborating with academic and industry partners can open doors to new opportunities and contacts.

Remember, perseverance is key; building a network takes time, and patience will be your ally in this endeavour. Combining these strategies will create a robust and thriving society.



How to find funding for establishing and running a Society in the UK?

To secure funding for the establishment and operation of a society in the UK, a strategic approach that combines various sources of income is essential.

Embassies play a pivotal role, offering support that can be invaluable, even if it's in-kind. Additionally, reaching out to **foundations, banks and science and technology funders** in the UK and your home country can provide financial backing. When engaging with potential partners, it's crucial to highlight what the society can offer, such as access to high-profile researchers in the UK who may be considering a return to their home country, can offer scientific expertise and an expanded network.

Initiating **events** that require minimal funding is a practical starting point. These can include public science talks, museum visits, or training sessions led by volunteers. Collaborating with other organisations, such as embassies, local cafes and pubs, or universities your members work at (with free access to venues), can help reduce costs and increase visibility.

The core funding for running the society can also come from **membership fees**, supplemented by grants and sponsorships. With growing recognition of the Society and its activities, more funding opportunities will arise, including consultancy projects. By combining these methods, your society can establish a robust financial foundation to support its activities and growth.

What are the expected challenges for the new diasporas Society?



Establishing a new diaspora society in the UK comes with a unique set of challenges that require careful planning and management.

Volunteer fluctuation is a common issue, with varying levels of activity, skills, interests, and availability. The potential departure of volunteers due to life changes, such as completing academic programs, can impact continuity. Engaging members with valuable services,

networking opportunities, and regular events, while understanding their motivations, will help retain their commitment. At the same time, managing workloads effectively is crucial, ensuring commitment, sharing responsibilities, and addressing turnover and gaps in knowledge.

Financial challenges may arise, particularly if the society relies on membership fees. Volunteers might face personal expenses when attending or organising activities. Diversifying funding sources through grants, membership fees, sponsorships, and fundraising events is essential.

Establishing a strong **organisational structure** with clear governance and defined roles is vital for efficient operations and effective decision-making. A lack of technical knowledge on administrative processes, such as tax obligations and staff hiring, can also pose difficulties.

The **society's ambition** must be balanced with the broad interests of the diaspora and the feasibility of the activities planned. The frequency and size of these activities will depend on the working group's capacity.

External factors such as sponsors' interests, socio-political events (like Brexit), and global crises (such as pandemics) can significantly influence the society's agenda and operations.

Proactively addressing these challenges will lay a solid foundation for the society's growth and impact.



What are the key activities/actions a Society can focus on?

Key activities a society can focus on include:

- **Building a Social Network:** Establishing a robust social network is crucial. This involves organising regular social, technical, and outreach events in various UK cities, offering a mentoring scheme, and serving as a welcoming point of contact for newcomers. This fosters creation of a vibrant community of scientists and researchers.
- **Science Communication:** As science communicators, the society should host outreach events and competitions in science communication, such as storytelling, photography, and public speaking. Maintaining a blog and producing a podcast can also enhance engagement.

- **Policy Engagement:** Acting as science representatives, the society can engage with science policy stakeholders in both the UK and home country, contributing suggestions for political measures.
- **Scientific Mediation:** The society can facilitate collaborations with institutions from the home country and support mobility programs between them and the institutions in the UK, strengthening scientific ties. The society should support the bidirectional flow of students and scientists and provide career advice, mentorship, and information about fellowships and financial support to help members grow professionally and integrate into the UK's scientific community.

Combining these efforts will ensure a dynamic and supportive environment for the diaspora's scientific talents.

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www.connects-uk.org.uk info@connects-uk.org