

CONNECTS-UK Contribution to the Call for Evidence for the European framework for science diplomacy

From CONNECTS-UK, pan-EU platform in the UK aimed at fostering scientific collaborations between the EU and the UK, as well as advocating for the community of EU researchers working in the UK, we strongly believe that the EU and its Member States should focus and consider the importance of science diplomacy.

We believe that the EU should pay more attention to science diplomacy and invest in having diplomatic representation that values and pursues science and research collaborations between countries. Therefore, we think that EU Member States' embassies as well as EU delegations should structure diplomatic missions in a way that allows for the promotion of science, research, and innovation across borders. To achieve this, we defend two strategies: first, that EU governments provide specialised training in science diplomacy to their diplomats; second, that EU diplomatic missions increase the number of scientists and researchers that work or are directly involved in diplomatic missions. We advocate for the figure of “scientific attaché” to exist in EU diplomatic missions, and we recommend that the profile of this role should be broader, so that both diplomats specialised in science diplomacy or senior researchers can opt in for this position and support each other. We also believe that EU delegations around the world should take the lead in supporting the embassies and the scientific attachés to establish connections with academic institutions and researchers.

We really value recommendation 7.4 within the report “A European Framework for Science Diplomacy – Recommendations of the EU Science Diplomacy Working Groups”, which highlights the role and potential of scientific diasporas. Furthermore, we would specifically underscore the work of scientific diaspora organisations as trusted civil society partners capable of bridging the gap between institutional diplomacy and the research/scientific community in practice. CONNECTS-UK is cited in the report as an example of a scientific professional organisation that collaborates closely with embassies to contribute towards science diplomacy efforts. We consider the position of CONNECTS-UK, representing the EU scientific diaspora in the UK, to also be key because of the strategic importance of EU-UK scientific and research relations. The UK is a third country with historically deep, trusted and highly relevant scientific links with the EU and EU Member States. This means that the organised EU research diaspora in the UK has even greater potential and value as a partner for maintaining and rebuilding cooperation. This is also the position we set out in our article in Science & Diplomacy, “The Pivotal Role of EU Research Diasporas in EU-UK Scientific and Diplomatic Relations”, where we demonstrate how research diaspora organisations like CONNECTS-UK can help sustain and strengthen EU-UK science diplomacy efforts.

Finally, we advocate that supporting research and talent mobility is essential for science diplomacy. It is important that researchers and innovators can move freely between countries, as facilitating mobility strengthens international networks and connections that the EU and Member States can draw on for science diplomacy efforts. This can be supported by ensuring that university and professional qualifications are recognised across the EU, and by establishing MoUs with third countries with compatible research and innovation systems to allow mutual recognition of



qualifications. Reducing these structural and administrative barriers will make mobility more effective, and in turn reinforce the EU's capacity to sustain and develop scientific collaboration globally.