

Terms of Reference
CONNECTS-UK Tandem Scheme

TANDEM SCHEME

Pairing established and newcomer EU
researchers in the UK



connectsuk



Co-funded by
the European Union



1. Background

1.1. CONNECTS-UK: The project

What is CONNECTS-UK?

CONNECTS-UK is a collaborative platform created in 2022 by the scientific diasporas of Finland, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Netherlands, and Spain in the UK, together with Native Scientists. With financial support from the European Commission, CONNECTS-UK aims to establish itself as a modern hub for science diplomacy. We are building on strong traditions of our member associations, who have been supporting EU-UK scientific relations for over 15 years and have forged connections with major organisations, such as the Embassies of EU Member States in the UK, and EU research institutions.

CONNECTS-UK's objectives

The chief objective of this action is to strengthen the EU-UK relations through the reinforcement of the communities of EU researchers in the UK.

Our four main goals are:

- 1) Establishing a professional network of EU researchers in the UK.
- 2) Furthering research on the community of EU researchers in the UK and on EU-UK scientific collaboration and mobility.
- 3) Providing policy advice and advocacy to EU and UK stakeholders.
- 4) Developing science outreach programmes for the public in the UK, especially children, led by EU researchers.

1.2. Policy & Advocacy within CONNECTS-UK

Within CONNECTS-UK'S Policy & Advocacy work, we have a focus on three objectives:

- 1) Promoting flow of information and support between EU researchers in regard to working as a researcher in the UK and the EU
- 2) Language- and knowledge-brokering at the science-policy level
- 3) Influencing on decision-making and policymaking, at EU level, UK level and EU Member State level

The Tandem Scheme is an activity developed within the Policy & Advocacy work of CONNECTS-UK.

2. Purpose and objectives of the activity

2.1. Purpose

The purpose of the Tandem Scheme is to facilitate the establishment and integration of incoming EU researchers (*Explorers*) into the UK research community and ecosystem through pairing them with UK-established EU researchers (*Guides*).

2.2. Objectives

Primary objectives

- Promote the exchange of information and knowledge between established EU researchers in the UK and newcomer EU researchers regarding:
 - Research ecosystem and academic culture of the UK
 - Career development and professional opportunities as a researcher in the UK
 - Life, culture, and practical aspects of living in the UK
 - Administrative processes in the UK
- Enrich the connections and support within the community of EU researchers in the UK.
- Co-develop a “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK” between the participants of the Tandem Scheme and the Scheme Coordination Team, led by the latter.

Secondary objectives

- Create communication channels between researchers and research institutions in the EU and in the UK.
- Foster integration and inclusion of EU citizens that come to the UK.
- Set a precedent for research institutions, research funding bodies, EU embassies and consulates in the UK and EU institutions in the UK to continue to develop this Tandem Scheme.

3. Participants

3.1. Guide (established EU researcher)

Eligibility and profile

- EU researcher or research professional (involved in research activities) within academia, industry, or non-profit organisations.
 - Any research field
 - Any research stage, with a special focus on mid-career level or demonstrable experience in leading research activities
- Currently residing and working in the UK.
 - Special focus on 5+ years residence in the UK
 - Planning to continue residing and working in the UK until at least the maximum length of the tandeming period (6 months from recruiting, more information in **subsection 5.2.**)
- Volunteer basis.
- Knowledgeable and able to provide advice about current requirements to join research in the UK.

Expected role

- Act as a mentor, providing insights into the UK's research landscape, academic culture, practical aspects of living in the UK, administrative processes, and career development opportunities.
- Aim to introduce the *Explorer* to their professional network, expanding connections within the EU research community in the UK.
- Collaborate with the Scheme Coordination Team to create the "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK", sharing experience and expertise.

3.2. Explorer (newcomer EU researcher)

Eligibility and profile

- EU based researcher (or recently begun to be a UK based researcher coming from the EU in the case of applying from the UK)
- Active researcher within academia, industry, or non-profit organisation.
 - Any research field
 - Any career stage
- Currently living and working in the UK or with plans on coming to live and work in the UK as a researcher.
 - Maximum of 3 years in the UK (when applying already in the UK)
 - Maximum of 3 months before coming to the UK (when applying before coming to the UK)
- Volunteer basis.

Expected role

- Proactively contact the Guide, seek information, and ask questions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the UK research context.
- Contribute to enriching the network of EU researchers in the UK by forming connections and actively participating in CONNECTS-UK initiatives.
- Provide feedback and share their unique perspective as a newcomer to help shape the "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK" and to showcase their experience in CONNECTS-UK website.

4. Scope of the activity

4.1. Target audience

Primary target audience

- Newcomer EU researchers living and working in the UK
- Established EU researchers living and working in the UK

Secondary target audience

- Research institutions (both EU and UK)
- Research funding bodies (both EU and UK)
- EU research community/diaspora in the UK
- EU research community
- EU embassies and consulates in the UK
- EU institutions in the UK
- EU citizens living and working in the UK

4.2. Participant cohorts

Total participants

The activity will aim to have at least 32 participants.

Cohorts

- The activity will take place as an ongoing cohort until the project finishes.

4.3. Thematic areas

The thematic areas tackled in the course of this activity by each pair between *Guide* and *Explorer* include (but are not limited to):

- Research ecosystem
- Career development
- Professional opportunities
- Administrative processes
- Living in the UK: practicalities, culture, etc.
- Networking opportunities

4.4. Products of the activity

Evaluation report of the Tandem Scheme

There will be one final evaluation report of the Tandem Scheme.

To read more information about the evaluation of the Tandem Scheme refer to **subsections 5.1.** and **5.3.**, and **section 6.**

Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK

In parallel to the delivery of the activity, the Scheme Coordination Team will lead the elaboration of a “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”. This activity will be co-developed by the participants of the Tandem Scheme and the Scheme Coordination Team, led by the latter.

To read more information about the “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK” refer to **subsections 5.1.** and **5.3.**, and **section 7.**

4.5. Sustainability of the activity

The Tandem Scheme is designed to be a sustainable initiative with a long-term impact. The activity aims to ensure its continued success beyond the project through four aspects:

- **Ensuring continuous improvement:** Data and feedback will be thoroughly analysed to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. This analysis will inform the evolution of the Tandem Scheme for potential future cohorts, ensuring it remains relevant and addresses the evolving needs of EU researchers coming to the UK.
- **Creating an enduring resource:** The co-created "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK" will serve as a foundational resource. Regular updates based on feedback and research will keep the “Guide for EU researchers in the UK” relevant and up-to-date.
- **Building lasting relationships:** The Tandem Scheme aims to foster durable connections between *Guides* and *Explorers*. These connections will strengthen the community of EU researchers in the UK, offering support and knowledge exchange.

- **Influencing policy and practice:** Learnings and best practices from the Tandem Scheme will be shared with the secondary target audience (e.g., UK research institutions, EU institutions in the UK) for potential replications or continuations of the format. CONNECTS-UK aims to encourage these stakeholders to develop similar initiatives, influencing them to use their resources to reach more potential participants.

5. Organisation of the activity

5.1. Primary activity and Dual Pathway

The primary activity of the Tandem Scheme is “tandeming”, this is, the creation of a pair between a newcomer EU researcher and an established EU researcher in the UK, where the relationship focuses on support, advice, and knowledge and information sharing. The established researcher (the *Guide*) offers guidance on navigating the UK research system, understanding the culture, and handling the practicalities of living in the UK. The newcomer researcher (the *Explorer*) gains valuable insights, builds connections, and gets the support they need to thrive in their new environment.

Dual Pathway

In parallel to the delivery of the activity of tandeming, the Tandem Scheme also comprises two pathways that lead to the products of the activity (see **subsection 4.4**).

- **Pathway 1: Evaluation of the Tandem Scheme**

The first pathway of the Tandem Scheme refers to its evaluation, including the monitoring and assessment of the activity as well as the collection of feedback from participants.

This pathway focuses on the implementation of the activity and the production of evaluation reports for its improvement. For more information on how the monitoring, assessment, and feedback collection will be carried out, see **section 6**.

- **Pathway 2: Co-development of the “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”**

The second pathway of the Tandem Scheme refers to the collaboration between the Scheme Coordination Team and the participants of the activity in relation to the elaboration of a “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”.

One of CONNECTS-UK activities within its Policy & Advocacy work is to create a guide that encompasses all relevant information that an EU researcher may need when deciding to come to the UK to live and work as a researcher. Given the synergies between this and the Tandem Scheme, the “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK” will be co-developed by the participants of the Tandem Scheme and the Scheme Coordination Team, led by the latter. Participants of the Tandem Scheme, with a special focus on *Explorers*, will contribute to the elaboration of the “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK” by providing feedback and information based on their experiences.

This pathway focuses on the collaboration between the Scheme Coordination Team and the participants in relation to the production of the “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”. For more information on how the co-development will be carried out, see **section 7**.

5.2. Recruiting & Pairing

Recruitment

- **Recruitment of Guides**

The recruitment of Guides will be carried out through an open call, publicly disseminated through CONNECTS-UK's website and social media, as well as by the associations of EU research diasporas in the UK, EU embassies and consulates, CONNECTS-UK's partners, and universities and research institutions.

- 1) The Scheme Coordination Team will prepare and publish the open call, including in it the application form to be filled out by prospective participants.
- 2) Once the application forms are received, the Scheme Coordination Team will conduct a discretionary selection of potential Guides, cross checking their eligibility, and based on their suitability and potential benefit gained from participating in the activity.
- 3) The Scheme Coordination Team will cross check the availability to participate of the selected potential Guides and contact eligible potential Guides that weren't selected if needed.

- **Recruitment of Explorers**

The recruitment of Explorers will be carried out through an open call, publicly disseminated through CONNECTS-UK's website and social media, as well as by the associations of EU research diasporas in the UK, EU embassies and consulates, CONNECTS-UK's partners, and universities and research institutions.

- 1) The Scheme Coordination Team will prepare and publish the open call, including in it the application form to be filled out by prospective participants.
- 2) Once the application forms are received, the Scheme Coordination Team will conduct a discretionary selection of potential Explorers, cross checking their eligibility, and based on their suitability and potential benefit gained from participating in the activity.¹
- 3) The Scheme Coordination Team will cross check the availability to participate of the selected potential Explorers and contact eligible potential Explorers that weren't selected if needed.

Pairing

- **Criteria**

The criterion for pairing is based on the preference ranking form filled out by the Explorers to select their prospective Guide.

- **Process**

Once the Guides and Explorers have been recruited, the Scheme Coordination Team will send out a preference ranking form to be filled out by Explorers to select their preferred Guide. The Explorers will need to rank all the available Guides listed on CONNECTS-UK's website.

The Scheme Coordination Team will discretionarily allocate pairs considering the preference ranking form filled out by Explorers, seeking to maximise all the Explorers' preferences.

5.3. Stages

¹ Priority will be given for potential Explorers that have been in the UK for less than 6 months or are looking to move in less than 3 months.

After Recruitment & Pairing, the Tandem Scheme follows 4 stages: Brief Document (Stage 1), Tandeming Period (Stage 2), Debrief Session (Stage 3), and Results (Stage 4). As stated in **subsection 5.1**, the delivery of the activity of tandeming, carried out by the allocated pairs, takes place in parallel with the Dual Pathway.

Stage 1: Brief Document

The Brief Document is the stage that takes place after the pairs have been allocated, and with the objective of introducing the Explorers to their corresponding Guides and sending them a document that presents the activity. The Brief Document has specific objectives in relation to the Dual Pathway of the Tandem Scheme:

- **Evaluation of the Tandem Scheme**
The Brief Document's objective is to present the activity to participants, informing about the expected roles of each person within the pair and the thematic areas that need to be tackled throughout the Tandeming Period.
- **Co-development of the "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK"**
The Brief Document's objective is to present the preliminary "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK" making available to Explorers the basic information about the transition and processes they are experiencing. For more information about this preliminary document, see **subsection 7.1**.

Additionally, the Brief Document will serve the purpose of engaging all participants in other CONNECTS-UK's initiatives.

Stage 2: Tandeming Period

The Tandeming Period is the main stage within the activity, comprising the connection developed between Explorers and Guides, where the Guide offers guidance on navigating the UK research system, understanding the culture, and handling the practicalities of living in the UK, and the Explorer gains valuable insights, builds connections, and gets the support they need to thrive in their new environment. The format in which this connection takes place is flexible, with the possibility of having online or in-person meetings, with a compromise by the Guide to making efforts to be available when requested by the Explorer. The Tandeming Period will last between a maximum of 5 months (see complete timeline in **subsection 5.4**). Additionally, the Tandeming Period has specific objectives in relation to the Dual Pathway of the Tandem Scheme:

- **Evaluation of the Tandem Scheme**
The Tandeming Period's objective is to carry out the main activity of tandeming, with the support and monitoring of the Scheme Coordination Team when needed.
- **Co-development of the "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK"**
The Tandeming Period's objective is to collect information from the Explorers, focused on the kind of content, knowledge, and focus they would like to see reflected in the final "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK".

Explorers will receive and fill out a form before starting the Tandeming Period (and just after the Brief Document has been delivered) to identify their anticipated challenges as newcomers to the UK, areas for development during the tandeming period, and desired topics for the "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK". A similar form will be received and filled out near the end of the Tandeming Period to gather feedback on their actual experiences, progress made, and any further suggestions for the "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK".

Stage 3: Debrief Session

The Debrief Session is an online session, organised and led by the Scheme Coordination Team, taking place to conclude the Tandeming Period and with the main objective of gathering feedback from the participants. It will encompass a feedback forum and a focus group. Additionally, the Debrief Session has specific objectives in relation to the Dual Pathway of the Tandem Scheme:

- **Evaluation of the Tandem Scheme**

The Debrief Session's objective is to collect feedback from the participants on the organisation and implementation of the Tandem Scheme.

Explorers will receive and fill out a feedback survey before the Debrief Session (and when the Tandeming Period is coming to an end), as well as participate in the Debrief Session's feedback forum, an open discussion to assess the course of the Tandeming Period and make suggestions for improvements.

- **Co-development of the “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”**

The Debrief Session's objective is to collect further information from the participants focused on the kind of content, knowledge, and focus they would like to see reflected in the final “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”.

Explorers will participate in the Debrief Session's focus group, a guided discussion led by the Scheme Coordination Team, specifically by the Policy and Research Analyst of CONNECTS-UK, and centred around the themes that appeared in the forms that were received and filled out by *Explorers* in the Tandeming Period.

Stage 4: Results

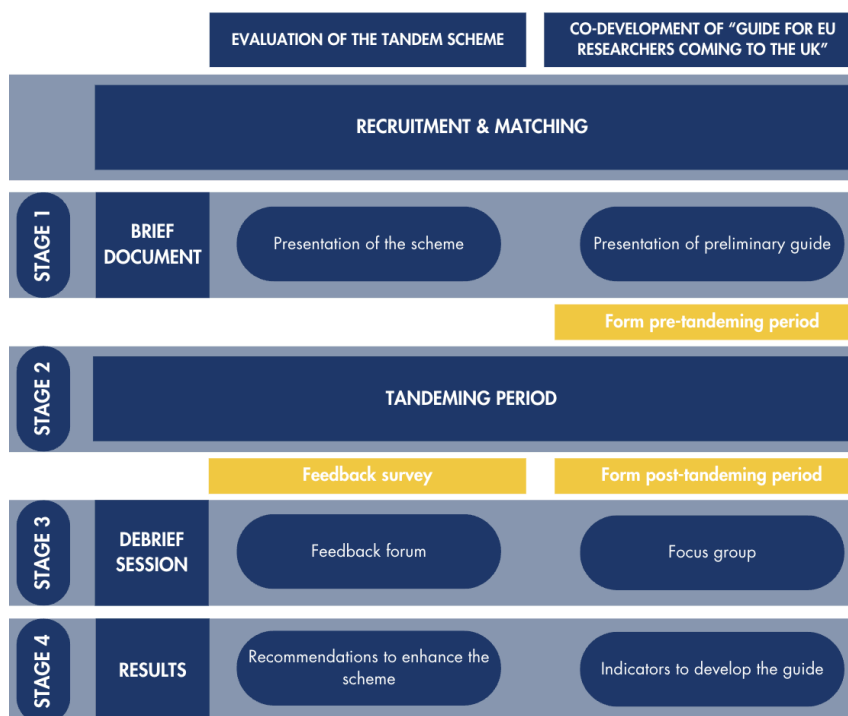
The Results stage is the stage that corresponds to the conclusions drawn by the delivery of the activity. The Results stage has specific objectives in relation to the Dual Pathway of the Tandem Scheme:

- **Evaluation of the Tandem Scheme**

The Results stage corresponds to the production of an evaluation report, including the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the feedback survey and the feedback forum (see Stage 3: Debrief Session, in **subsection 5.3.**). This will serve to create recommendations to enhance and improve the Tandem Scheme.

- **Co-development of the “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”**

The Results stage corresponds to the production of a draft “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK” informed by the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the forms (see Stage 2: Tandeming Period, in **subsection 5.3.**) and the focus group (see Stage 3: Debrief Session, in **subsection 5.3.**). This will serve to create indicators to develop a complete “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”.



The outline above shows the organisation of **subsections 5.2.** and **5.3.**

5.4. Scheme Coordination Team

Roles

- **Policy and Research Analyst:** Manages the overall design of the Tandem Scheme, directs its implementation, and leads the development of the "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK".
- **PARSUK members:** Leads the Policy & Advocacy work of CONNECTS UK, and therefore the strategic guidance and supervision of the Tandem Scheme and the "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK", as well as its design and development.
- **Secretariat of CONNECTS-UK:** Provides essential support and guidance, ensuring the alignment of the Tandem Scheme with CONNECTS-UK's goals.

Responsibilities²

- **Prepare and conduct preparations of the activity:** The Policy and Research Analyst, in collaboration with PARSUK and the Secretariat, develops program guidelines, Terms of Reference, and creates recruitment materials.
- **Recruit and pair Guides and Explorers:** The Policy and Research Analyst leads the recruitment process, screens applications assisted by PARSUK and the Secretariat, and pairs Guides and Explorers based on preferences and suitability, also assisted by the Secretariat.

² Includes only the main responsibilities for the development and implementation of the Tandem Scheme.

- **Prepare and conduct Brief Document:** The Policy and Research Analyst, in collaboration with PARSUK, designs and leads the Brief Document to introduce the program, align expectations, and kick-start the mentoring relationship.
- **Create pre- and post-tandeming forms:** The Policy and Research Analyst develops pre- and post-tandem forms to gather feedback and inform the development of the “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”.
- **Support *Guides* and *Explorers*:** The Policy and Research Analyst provides ongoing support to participants, addresses questions, and resolves issues that may arise.
- **Prepare and conduct Debrief Session:** The Policy and Research Analyst, in collaboration with PARSUK, plans and facilitates the Debrief Session, leading the feedback forum and focus group.
- **Assess and evaluate the Tandem Scheme:** The Policy and Research Analyst thoroughly analyses feedback and data collected, identifying key insights and areas for improvement.
- **Lead the co-development of the “Guide for EU Researchers coming to the UK”:** The Policy and Research Analyst leads the co-development of the Guide with PARSUK, incorporating data and insights. This includes inviting participants (*Guides* and *Explorers*) to co-author sections of the final Guide.
- **Work towards the sustainability and future development of the scheme:** The Policy and Research Analyst, PARSUK, and Secretariat lead efforts to ensure the Tandem Scheme's sustainability. This includes collaborating with the wider CONNECTS-UK project for support.

6. Evaluation of the Tandem Scheme

6.1. Feedback survey

This survey will be designed to measure the Tandem Scheme's success from the *Explorer's* perspective. It will include quantitative indicators (e.g., ratings on a scale of 1-5) to assess satisfaction levels with the guidance received, the overall value of the experience, and the extent to which the *Explorer's* needs were met.

6.2. Feedback forum

This forum will complement the survey with in-depth qualitative feedback. During the Debrief Session, the Scheme Coordination Team will lead a discussion with *Explorers*, prompting them to share their experiences, challenges, and successes within the Tandem Scheme. The focus will be on identifying areas where the Scheme excelled and highlighting areas for improvement.

7. Co-development of the “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”

7.1. Preliminary “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”

The Scheme Coordination Team will develop a short preliminary “Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK”. This document will be shared with participants in the Brief Document and serves as a basic template for the final co-developed document.

7.2. Pre- and post-tandeming period forms

These brief forms will be a key tool in understanding the needs and concerns of incoming EU researchers. The pre-tandeming form will help identify the areas where *Explorers* anticipate the greatest challenges and highlight the information they consider most crucial. The post-tandeming form will reveal the real-world challenges they faced and any gaps in the existing resources they would like to see addressed in the final “Guide for EU researchers in the UK”.

7.3. Focus group

The semi-structured focus group will provide a platform for *Explorers* to share their perspectives and experiences in more depth. Guided by the Scheme Coordination Team in the Debrief Session, participants will discuss the key themes from the post-tandeming form, allowing for a richer understanding of the participants' experiences. The discussion will help identify the most pressing issues faced by new EU researchers and ultimately co-create the content and focus of the "Guide for EU researchers coming to the UK."

8. Data Protection

Find information on the processing of the personal data of participants of the Tandem Scheme [here](#).