

## How to Benefit from the Power of Researchers' Diaspora Networks

*Europe wishes to work closely with the European scientific diasporas as Europe has always supported mobility*

### The Benefits and Challenges of Mobility

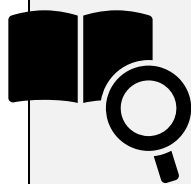
Being away from home for longer or shorter time is often an important part of the career development of researchers. The associated benefits of researchers' mobility for the researcher is often improved academic output and better networks, for senior researchers, and skill and career development for junior researchers.

The benefits for the countries involved are also clear; the receiving country gains access to additional skills and expertise, and for the sending country the scientific diaspora provides productive links internationally and in many cases also gains knowledge when the researcher returns (Guthrie, Lichten, Corbett, & Wooding, 2017, p. vi). In addition to that there are arguments to be made that increased international brain circulation in general leads to disproportionately more scientific output globally (Kurzgesagt, 2018). This seems to be truly a win-win situation for everybody involved.

That being said, mobility isn't painless and it's the researchers themselves that have to bear the brunt of the cost. A mobile researcher has to tear himself up by the roots and adapt to a totally new society and culture with all the personal challenges that comes with that.

This is where Diaspora Networks can be useful. They can help the researcher personally as well as professionally.

### What is a Diaspora Network?



A Diaspora is a group of people that originate from the same place but live elsewhere. A Diaspora network is usually an organised association of these people in the receiving country that creates a platform for them to get to know each other but can also refer to a more informal group that does similar activities.

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#### //DATE

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## The Benefits of Researchers' Diaspora Network

### Personal Benefits



Meeting people that you share a background with can deliver immense personal benefits, especially at the beginning of your stay abroad, but also to a certain extent as time goes by. Being able to talk in your native language and see “familiar” faces can do a lot to dampen the culture shock when settling in a new place. It can bring comfort and bridges psychologically the gap between your current and past experiences, helping with putting all the new things you’ve been learning into a comprehensible context.

In addition to that, a diaspora network can also put you in contact with people that provide you with plethora of practical advices about the place you are staying; even simple things in relations to how to get by in the day-to-day life can sometimes be made a whole of a lot easier with the right nudge from a person that has stayed longer but also might be more privy about the needs of his countrymen. It’s also fun!



For those that have stayed longer there can still be some personal benefits. They might already be well adapted to their new country of residence and have established a good network of friends and co-workers but meeting up with people from their own country can still be of value. It can help people to feel rooted, maintaining their language, reminiscing, as well as be rewarding in terms of being able to help your peers that are “fresh of the boat”. As time goes by the professional benefits of the Diaspora network also starts to accumulate.

### Professional Benefits

As we can see, there are many benefits of belonging to general Diaspora networks, but for scientists in particular there are professional benefits of belonging to a special Researchers' Diaspora Networks.

- Helps with quickly establishing a network of contacts amongst your peers in the host country that can also facilitate local connections.
- Helps you to identify funding opportunities that are relevant to you, especially those that focus on supporting cooperation between your host and home country.
- Helps you to realize the strengths of talents with your background in the host country.
- Helps you with keeping your connections and links in your home alive and growing. The researcher can serve as a bridge between cultures when it comes to international cooperation and in the case of returning your networks will help you to re-establish yourself back home.
- Good way to get on the radar of your home country's government, companies and institutes for your unique skill set and position.

Depending on the Researchers' Diaspora Network, the organisation might also engage in a more structured approach to career development of their members, such as through mentorship programmes, match-making and other activities.

*Researchers' Diaspora Networks allows for a more organic **brain circulation** on both national and international level, frameworks of support and mentoring, opportunities for networking and collaboration*

## Which European Researchers' Diaspora Networks Are There in China?



### AAIC – Association of Italian Scholars in China

AAIIC (Association of Italian Scholars in China) is a non-profit organization founded in 2015, working in the fields of higher education, research & innovation in the People's Republic of China (PRC). They are professors, scholars, researchers living in China or coming to China on a regular schedule. Besides teaching they coordinate research projects, grants, and supervise students, and also put effort into creating a community of intellectuals, a multidisciplinary environment for the exchange of ideas and experiences. Their aim is to facilitate relocation of Italian academicians and researchers to China, sharing relevant news on positions, grants, and fellowships, and organize cultural events of scientific relevance, with the purpose of promoting cross-fertilization between the cultural environments of the two countries.



### Holland Science Network in China

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Holland Science Network is a network for Dutch researchers working in China, both full-time and part-time. It's for scientists with Dutch nationality or any other nationality that conducted PhD, post-doc and/or worked as a (visiting) professor at a Dutch University and is currently contracted by/associated with a Chinese university or CAS research institute for minimum 1 month (not necessarily consecutively) in a year. The network will be organising a yearly conference/workshop and providing a platform to stimulate dialogue and share experience. It also aims at providing an overview of financial schemes related to research in China and establish a link to the university system in China. The first Congress of the Holland Science Network will be taking place in Shanghai on 13 April 2018.

### Other informal networks

In addition to the formally organised Researchers' Diaspora Networks there are many other groups working in the same space. EURAXESS China is, for example, aware of diaspora activities for British scientist related to RCUK (Research Council UK), meetings for French-speaking scientists both organized by the French embassy and consulates as well as by private groups, and meeting where Norwegian scientists are welcome related to the NorAlumni organization for people in China with connection with Norway.

## My country doesn't have a network, what can I do?

A logical first step would be to approach the representatives of your country nearest embassy or consulate to inquiry about if they know about any informal diaspora networks as described above. Many European missions in China have dedicated officers for the topic of Science and Technology and they are in any case usually very happy to hear about their countrymen that are active in research in China and willing to share with them information.

Do you want to take it further? How about establishing and organising such a network? China is a rising science power and an ever-more relevant destination



for research collaboration internationally. Even though European researchers used to be few and far between in the past their numbers are increasing, getting closer to the critical mass needed to start organising. It's a great way to take a lead and develop strong contacts here in China. You can check if your country already has Diaspora networks in other countries and contact the people in charge offering to open a new charter. You can also check with the EURAXESS China Country Representative that can help you identify researchers from your own country and support you in your efforts.

## Two Cases

### European Researchers in the United States

In the United States there are many active European Scientific Diaspora Networks; including Austria, Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

EURAXESS North America has been very active in supporting these organisations organising annually a Joint Meeting of European Scientific Diasporas in North America.

Go the website of EURAXESS to also see an overview of these activities in addition to publications on the topic.

### Chinese Researchers abroad

Examples include The Association of Chinese-American Scientists and Engineers (ACSE) and the Australia-China Association of Scientists and Entrepreneurs (ACASE).

These networks not only aim at professional benefits but personal as well. As said by one of the members of EURAXESS China, WU Qiaoling from Peking University (北京大学 吴侨玲):

*“During the exchange program which lasted for over a year in Australia, I would participate in gatherings or travels organized by Chinese students or scholars there. After all, when you are in a foreign country, you will feel unusually close to your compatriots.”*

### How Can EURAXESS Help?

EURAXESS China offers cooperation with anybody that wants to get involved in Researchers' Diaspora Activities. We can help advertise the network's events and news, provide a way for new scientists to get in touch and feature the activities in our publications. We also organise regular networking events that can be focused on diaspora related topics.

We are a networking tool for European researchers active in China and for Chinese and international researchers wishing to collaborate and/or pursue a career in Europe. EURAXESS China provides information about research in Europe, European research policy, opportunities for research funding, for EU-China and international collaboration and for trans-national mobility.

**Membership is free** - go visit <http://china.euraxess.org>.

