

EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA
AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE
Strategic Forum for International
S&T Cooperation

Secretariat

Brussels, 6 March 2015
(OR. en)

ERAC-SFIC 1354/15

NOTE

Subject: SFIC Annual Report 2014

Delegations will find attached the SFIC Annual Report 2014 (Sixth Report of Activities of SFIC, covering the period 1 January 2014 - 31 December 2014) to the Council and the Commission, as adopted by the SFIC plenary on 4 March 2015.

SFIC Annual Report 2014

Sixth Report of Activities of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) (1 January 2014 - 31 December 2014)

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I. REPORT SUMMARY

1) *Progress on the implementation of the European Partnership for international S&T cooperation*

This document is based on the reporting duties of SFIC as stated in its mandate¹. Accordingly, progress is reported on achieving the objectives of the European Partnership in the field of international scientific and technological cooperation ("S&T cooperation") between the European Commission and the Member States, with a view to implementing a European strategy for international S&T cooperation.

In line with its 2013-2014 Work Programme, SFIC had the following achievements during 2014, related to its mandate and objectives:

- 1) Development of the external dimension of the European Research Area, where SFIC successfully:
 - accomplished its task of contributing to the design and development of the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation, as mandated by the Council, mainly via a Member States' consultation process and a workshop followed by a **SFIC opinion on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps**;
 - provided strategic advice to Council and Commission while contributing to the development of the international dimension of the European Research Area, mainly via a **SFIC opinion on the second ERA Progress Report**;
 - provided strategic advice to ERAC, Council and Commission on the **integration of the international dimension into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism**;
 - fulfilled the request given by the Council and contributed to the review of the ERA-related groups asked for, by assessing its work on the basis of its effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of SFIC's advice via a **SFIC self-assessment exercise**;

¹ Council Conclusions of 2 December 2008 concerning a European partnership for international scientific and technological cooperation. Official Journal of the European Union, C 18, 24.1.2009, p. 11- 13.

- contributed to the development of the international dimension of ERA by acknowledging international cooperation as the 6th ERA priority and proposing a related Top Action Priority on the forthcoming ERA Roadmap, via a **SFIC opinion on the ERA Roadmap**;
- contributed to brainstorming and information exchanges amongst EU/Member States and Associated Countries during the **SFIC Strategic Seminar** in Stockholm in June 2014, with discussions providing input for the preparation of the SFIC Work Programme 2015-16;
- contributed to the analysis of **common principles** in the field of international R&I cooperation, through the provision of relevant advice, as requested by the Council. A Working Group on common principles was created to that effect;
- developed interactions and engagements with relevant stakeholders in the R&I domain as well as ERA-related groups, contributing to **pooling and sharing relevant knowledge and information**, as stated in the SFIC mandate;
- contributed to increase the **visibility** of the external dimension of ERA, with its contribution to workshops and conferences and its presence in major events.

2) Development of joint EU/MS (AC) - SFIC initiatives, where SFIC successfully identified **common priorities and objectives** on STI issues with Brazil, USA, China and Russia, and contributed to the **development and coordination of joint activities** implemented by Member States and the Commission, as stated in the SFIC mandate, through various SFIC initiatives:

- Brazil: SFIC endorsed a Roadmap for Brazil and successfully contributed to the Tour of Brazil events organised during the year 2014;
- China: SFIC worked on the different options for future collaboration between EU/MS and China and worked towards a future EU/MS-China workshop in 2015;
- USA: SFIC developed priorities for action in line with the “Approaching USA” action points from 2011 for EU-USA cooperation, focusing on ocean and arctic transatlantic research cooperation, on the development of the innovation dimension in EU-USA relations and on awareness-raising activities for collaboration among researchers through the “Destination Europe” initiative.

- *Russia*: SFIC successfully launched a new initiative with Russia at technical level and started working on a Roadmap for cooperation with Russia in view of a future EU/MS/AC-Russia Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda;
- *Other*: SFIC pooled relevant knowledge and shared information and best practices concerning other third countries and regions.

3) Best practice and information sharing, where SFIC successfully:

- contributed to **sharing and structuring information** on international R&I cooperation activities of EU/Member States and third countries, as stipulated in the SFIC mandate. This was done by presentations of best practices at plenary meetings, SFIC-related workshops, and information sharing practices by the SFIC Secretariat.

2) *Outlook for 2015*

SFIC will start implementing its work programme for 2015-2016, still pursuing the overall objective of developing the external dimension of the ERA, through the following activities:

1. Contributing to the development and implementation of the ERA Roadmap in order to make full use of the external dimension of ERA and its potential for strengthening Europe's position in the world, with SFIC activities in line with the actions included in Priority 6 of the foreseen ERA Roadmap;
2. Providing strategic advice on EU/MS common priorities for international STI cooperation, in particular vis-à-vis Brazil, China, USA and Russia, as well as any other third-country or region where a clear added-value is identified;
3. Facilitating prior coordination when STI issues are items of summits, bi-regional/ bilateral dialogues and international fora. In this respect, the aim is to develop SFIC as a platform that regularly contributes to the preparation of a European position ahead of EU summits, SOMs and GSO meetings in relation to STI issues;

4. Enhancing the relevance and impact of the international dimension of ERA and Horizon 2020, particularly by contributing to the development of the future and/or updated Multi-Annual Roadmaps for key partner countries and regions;
5. Contributing to the integration of the international dimension into the European Monitoring Mechanism (EMM) and providing advice on relevant indicators;

3) *Recommendations*

In the light of the progress made and the findings in this report, SFIC recommends the Council and the Commission to:

1. Acknowledge the progress made by the Forum so far, including its advice on coordinated initiatives as well as the priority areas put forward by the SFIC Work Programme for 2015-2016;
2. Further implement the EU/MS joint initiatives towards Brazil, China, USA and Russia with the appropriate support to coordinate and strengthen the already existing bilateral activities with these countries;
3. Underline the potential and relevance of advice by SFIC, with the relevant information provided by the Commission, in the further development of:
 - a) the international dimension of the ERA, and in particular the ERA Roadmap;
 - b) the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative (or related to a revised EU 2020 strategy);
 - c) the coordination of international STI cooperation undertaken by Member States and the EU, including in the context of Horizon 2020²;
 - d) the ERA Monitoring Mechanism; and
 - e) the Multi-Annual Roadmaps.

² The Horizon 2020 Programme Committee is in charge of the monitoring of international cooperation within Horizon 2020.

4. Make use of SFIC as a regular platform that can contribute and provide advice and input to the preparation of a European position ahead of EU summits, SOMs and GSO meetings when STI issues are part of the agenda;
5. Encourage further information sharing efforts amongst SFIC Members and Observers and invite the respective Ministries, Commission Directorates-General, European External Action Service (EEAS) and science counsellors to share information and knowledge;
6. Encourage SFIC to support, upon request, ERAC and the other ERA-related groups in their work on the ERA activities and ERA monitoring for any aspects related to the international dimension.

II. DETAILED PROGRESS REPORT

1) *Development of the external dimension of the European Research Area*

The Competitiveness Council of 30 May 2013 adopted Council conclusions on "Enhancing and focusing EU international cooperation in research and innovation: A strategic approach"³, in which the Council encouraged SFIC to continue its advisory work with its initiatives and invited SFIC to contribute to the design and development of the Multi-Annual Roadmaps, while developing joint research and innovation agendas between the Union, Member States and strategic partners in third countries. The Council also invited SFIC to contribute to the development of the common principles for the conduct of international cooperation in research and innovation, as well as to continue its efforts towards sharing of information on Member States' and the Union's international R&D&I cooperation policies and activities.

It is within this mandate from the Council on the international R&I cooperation domain that SFIC has carried out its activities and actions also during 2014.

Moreover, progress on the European Research Area has also influenced SFIC's work. The Council Conclusions on ERA Progress from 21 February 2014, dealing with the first ERA Progress report, took into account the input from SFIC, as stated in the SFIC opinion on the first ERA Progress Report⁴. The Council, considering the external dimension as an integral part of the ERA, asked the Commission to adequately address this important aspect in the second ERA Progress Report and beyond, notably by moving towards the integration of an international cooperation dimension into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism. The second ERA Progress Report⁵ issued by the Commission in September 2014, stressed the importance of the international dimension being mainstreamed across all the ERA priorities, with the rationale that international cooperation "should be enhanced as a cross-cutting priority of the ERA actions".

³ Doc. 10318/13.

⁴ Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1356/13.

⁵ Doc. 13197/14 (COM (2014) 575 final).

On 11 September 2014, the Commission also published a report on the implementation of the strategy on international R&I cooperation (including a Staff Working Document with the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation)⁶. In its report, the Commission highlighted the progress made on framework conditions (with focus on those -mainly emerging- countries not automatically eligible anymore for funding under Horizon 2020), the participation in international organisations and multilateral initiatives, and the synergies with EU's external policies and the activities of the Member States. However, the report also stressed the need for further work in assessing impacts with the use of quantitative indicators for international cooperation.

The following sections present the different milestones accomplished by SFIC during 2014 directed towards the development of the external dimension of ERA and an enhanced EU/MS partnership for international STI cooperation:

a. Strategic advice and commitment to common priorities and European added-value

– **Contribution to the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation**

Contributing to the Multi-Annual Roadmaps (MARs) process was one of the main tasks for SFIC during 2014, as mandated by the Council. In the beginning of 2014, the Commission, through SFIC, consulted Member States and Associated Countries on existing bi-lateral cooperation with international partners such as USA, Brazil, India, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, South Africa, Canada, New Zealand and Mexico; as well as for the following regions: Africa, ASEAN, CELAC, Eastern Partnership, Gulf countries, Southern Mediterranean. Such input served for the preparation of the draft MARs.

At the SFIC plenary meeting on 5 February 2014, the Commission announced the organisation of a workshop on the Roadmaps preparation with Member States representatives on 26 March 2014. Such workshop, with the presence of several Member States and Associated Countries, was a huge success and represented a milestone on cooperation between the Commission and Member States.

⁶ Doc. 13219/14 + ADD1.

Following the workshop discussions, SFIC issued an opinion on the MARs⁷, adopted by written procedure on 10 June 2014, which welcomed the Commission's approach but encouraged the Commission to follow recommendations on (both content and process) in the future, for instance the need to emphasize the EU-added value and to indicate the analytical basis for the selection of the priorities (including the analysis of the STI strategy of the partner country/region) also taking into account past and current SFIC work under SFIC country initiatives.

To continue with the process after the MARs adoption by the Commission in September 2014, the SFIC plenary on 23 September 2014 agreed to write a SFIC opinion on the international R&I cooperation strategy and the MARs process. At the 8 December 2014 plenary, a draft opinion was discussed aiming at encouraging the Commission to continue actively the work on the MARs and give the right signal in terms of the implementation of the Strategy on international R&I cooperation and in relation to R&I policy and activities with third countries. The opinion was adopted via written procedure on 27 January 2015.

SFIC successfully accomplished its task of contributing to the design and development of the MARs, as mandated by the Council, mainly via a Member States' consultation process and a workshop followed by a SFIC opinion on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps.

– ***Contribution to the ERA Progress Report***

Through a SFIC opinion on the first ERA Progress Report, SFIC recommended that the external dimension should be much more elaborated in the second ERA Progress Report 2014 – both at EU level and Member State level, notably by moving towards the integration of the “international cooperation monitoring mechanism” into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism. To that effect, the second ERA Progress Report stressed the importance of the international dimension being mainstreamed across all the ERA priorities, with international cooperation being "enhanced as a cross-cutting priority of the ERA actions".

⁷ Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1359/14.

Through a SFIC opinion on the second ERA Progress Report⁸, SFIC stressed its expectations with international cooperation being subject of a more comprehensive analysis within the next ERA Progress Report: SFIC welcomed the mainstreaming of international cooperation across all ERA priorities and stressed that international cooperation is an essential part of ERA and should not only be considered in its horizontal dimension being reflected in policy measures at all relevant levels, but also as a separate ‘sixth priority’, as agreed by the Council and ERAC.

SFIC successfully provided strategic advice to Council and Commission while contributing to the development of the international dimension of the European Research Area, via a SFIC opinion on the second ERA Progress Report.

– ***Contribution to the ERA monitoring mechanism:***

The DE delegation in SFIC continued following-up and liaising with the ERAC ad-hoc group on Monitoring & European Semester, embedding the international dimension to its work. Moreover, an ERAC opinion from January 2014 of the first European Research Area Progress Report included a specific conclusion recommending the integration of the international dimension into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism, following the SFIC opinion from 2013 on the issue.

SFIC successfully provided strategic advice to ERAC, Council and Commission on the integration of the international dimension into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism.

⁸ Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1362/14.

– *Contribution to the ERA governance in the context of the review of the ERA-related groups*

In its resolution of 30 May 2013⁹, the Council asked for a review of the ERA-related groups established by the Council to be done by the end of 2014 *"on the basis of (1) an assessment of the extent to which mutual cooperation, consultation and coordination as called for by the Council have effectively been achieved, (2) the timeliness and effectiveness of their advice, and (3) the efficiency of the functioning of these groups"*. Following a decision by the SFIC plenary on 19 May 2014, the SFIC conducted, via an online questionnaire facilitated by the SE delegation, a self-assessment of its activities according to its mandate and relevant Council conclusions concerning SFIC activities. 17 Member States and 2 Associated Countries answered the questionnaire, while another Member State also submitted some written input but out of the questionnaire. The questionnaire results provided both a quantitative and qualitative assessment of SFIC's work and Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR), SFIC Vice-Chair, was appointed rapporteur responsible for coordinating the work on the self-assessment exercise.

Following input from the online questionnaire as well as many exchanges amongst delegations in formal settings such as plenary meetings, and also an informal meeting of SFIC delegates back-to-back to the strategic seminar in Stockholm in June 2014, the SFIC self-assessment paper in the context of the ERA-related groups review¹⁰ was adopted via written procedure on 20 August 2014. The self-assessment highlighted the following key messages from SFIC to ERAC, Council and Commission:

- Delegations welcome the work done by SFIC since its creation at the end of 2008 in contributing to the external dimension of the ERA as well as to international S&T cooperation as a whole;
- SFIC's advice can be highly effective for both large and small countries;
- SFIC should not only focus on geographical priorities and on forward looking activities, but also on instruments for international S&T cooperation as well as impact and results;

⁹ Doc. 10331/13

¹⁰ Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1361/14

- SFIC should be consulted as soon as decisions or documents with foreseeable impact on international S&T cooperation are prepared or drafted within the usual decision-making processes (e.g. policy dialogues, preparation of bilateral and bi-regional summits);
- The involvement of more SFIC Members and Observers in SFIC activities should be promoted;
- Collaboration between SFIC, ERAC and ERA-related groups should be strengthened as well as with stakeholders and science counsellors networks;
- Further coordination at national level between national delegates in the different ERA-related groups should also be encouraged;
- In case the mandates of the ERA-related groups are revised, SFIC would like to see some modifications to its current mandate to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its work.

As discussions on the ERA governance were on-going during 2014, the SFIC Chair kept delegations up-to-date during SFIC plenaries and Steering Board meetings, for instance, he informed delegations about the extraordinary ERAC meeting of 7 November 2014 to discuss the ERA-related Groups and governance, where the Chair and Vice-Chair of SFIC participated.

At the SFIC plenary on 8 December 2014, the Chair presented a proposal for a revised SFIC mandate based on the self-assessment exercise. Such proposal, once approved by the Forum, would serve as an input to the Research Working Party discussions on the ERA governance during 2015.

SFIC successfully fulfilled the request given by the Council and contributed to the review of the ERA-related groups asked for, by assessing its work on the basis of its effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of its advice via a self-assessment exercise.

– *Contribution to the forthcoming ERA Roadmap*

At the SFIC plenary meeting on 23 September 2014, the Chair informed delegations about the discussions at ERAC and ERAC Steering Board level on the preparation towards the ERA Roadmap. Moreover, the DE delegation volunteered to do a first assessment of the ERA Roadmap contributions received on the international cooperation priority, and SFIC was kept informed on the developments accordingly.

The Chair and Vice-Chair of SFIC were invited together with the Chairs of the other ERA-related groups to the Plenary meeting of ERAC in October 2014 to provide input for a list of key actions linked to the six priorities with a view to develop the ERA Roadmap.

Following the ERAC meeting in October 2014, and taking into account that SFIC was asked to contribute to the process, it was decided to start a written procedure for a SFIC opinion on the ERA Roadmap for its adoption before the ERAC meeting in December 2014. The SFIC Steering Board discussed a draft text of the opinion at its meeting on 6 November and the agreed text was sent to all delegations. The SFIC opinion on the ERA Roadmap¹¹ was adopted via written procedure on 20 November and immediately transmitted to the Council Research Working Party, to the Commission and to ERAC.

With its opinion on the ERA Roadmap, SFIC welcomes and supports ERAC's structure for the ERA Roadmap with international cooperation as a clear and differentiated 6th priority, underlining the importance of international cooperation as an essential part of ERA. SFIC also highlighted the importance of having a stand-alone priority focusing on the external dimension of ERA as well as international cooperation considered as cross-cutting priority across all the other ERA priorities and actions. Moreover, SFIC also proposed a Top Action Priority in the ERA Roadmap based on "*Develop and implement joint strategic approaches and actions for international S&T cooperation on the basis of national priorities, as appropriate*". Within its opinion, SFIC also considered itself as the appropriate platform to facilitate the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA by coordinating the cooperation between Member States and the EU towards international partner countries.

¹¹ Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1364/14.

SFIC successfully contributed to the development of the international dimension of ERA by acknowledging international cooperation as the 6th ERA priority and proposing a related Top Action Priority on the forthcoming ERA Roadmap.

– *SFIC Strategic Seminar (Stockholm, 12-13 June 2014)*

The SE delegation organised the third SFIC Strategic Seminar, which took place in Stockholm on 12-13 June. The main purpose of the seminar was to exchange experiences on tools for research and innovation in ERA for bilateral and EU level collaboration. The key messages and reoccurring points during the discussion were the following:

- Need for an overview of initiatives (e.g. “mapping of different instruments used in international cooperation at MS and EU level”, meta-projects, better linkages and information between policy areas);
- Internationalisation of existing structures/creating permanent platforms (e.g. a more permanent basis for international cooperation in the context of e.g. JPIs, Eureka, KICs);
- SFIC as a key actor in the internationalisation processes (presence in e.g. Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committees -JSTCC-, active role in ERA, “monitoring” INCO in H2020);
- Need for “horizontal” approaches (e.g. tools and experiences that are applicable on other/new/future initiatives, challenge-based activities);
- Evaluation and feedback from actors on what is needed.

The SFIC Strategic seminar successfully contributed to brainstorming and information exchanges amongst EU/Member States and Associated Countries, with the strategic discussions providing input for the preparation of the SFIC Work Programme 2015-16.

– *Contribution to common principles for international cooperation in research and innovation*

During the end of 2013, SFIC developed a scoping paper on common principles highlighting the need to identify: (1) who the global players are, (2) which standards are used, and (3) gaps where SFIC and its Members and Observers can add value while avoiding duplication of efforts. To continue its work in the field, SFIC invited Science Europe to the plenary on 5 February 2014, for them to give their view on their contribution to the common principles debate, also as a member of the Global Research Council.

Two months later, in April 2014, a questionnaire on common principles for international cooperation (based on Commission's input) was sent to all SFIC Members and Observers. At the 19 May 2014 plenary, Ms. Julia LEWIS (UK), rapporteur of the Working Group on Common principles, gave a presentation on the results of the questionnaire, following the feedback received from several delegations. A number of international fora were identified; together with the three main priorities, namely: (1) Open Access; (2) Research infrastructures; and (3) Research integrity. SFIC delegates have the common understanding that there is a need to better coordinate the promotion of existing common principles both at EU and Member State level.

SFIC contributed to the analysis of common principles for the conduct of international R&I cooperation, through the provision of relevant advice, as requested by the Council. A Working Group on common principles was created to that effect, even though content/input from Commission and Member States was rather limited.

b. Networking and cooperation

SFIC successfully developed interactions and engagements with relevant stakeholders in the R&I domain as well as ERA-related groups, contributing to pooling and sharing relevant knowledge and information, as stated in the SFIC mandate.

– ***Interacting with other ERA-related groups***

International cooperation is part of all ERA activities and SFIC's role is to ensure coherence by supporting and providing advice to other ERA-related groups such as ERAC, GPC, SGHRM, Knowledge Transfer group and ESFRI on how to integrate an international dimension in their respective activities. Such interaction has been fruitful with the various SFIC opinions on the second ERA Progress Report, the ERA Roadmap and the MARs transmitted to ERAC. Mr. Dan ANDRÉE (SFIC Chair since 18 June 2013) is also a permanent member of the ERAC Steering Board, which guarantees strong links between the work of SFIC and that of ERAC. Moreover, SFIC, jointly with GPC, has been active on the review of the ERA-related Groups.

– ***Interacting with Science Europe***

Mr. Paul BOYLE (President of Science Europe) was invited to the SFIC plenary on 5 February 2014, giving a presentation mainly focusing on the work of Science Europe as well as their different surveys/studies on the state of science in Europe. Mr. BOYLE also touched upon the role of Science Europe as a member of the Global Research Council, taking into account its work on the common principles domain.

– ***Interacting with the EUREKA***

Ms. Sonja MERWAR, member of the EUREKA chairmanship team and Swiss High Level Representative, gave a presentation on the EUREKA role in relation to cooperation outside Europe as well as its planned and future initiatives at the SFIC plenary on 8 December 2014. EUREKA has also contributed to current work on the development of the ERA Roadmap via ERAC.

Furthermore, EUREKA's Eurostars project is a project under the 2nd pillar of Horizon 2020. Delegations very much welcomed the presentation and provided information on how the EUREKA framework is used at national level for bilateral cooperation with third countries, while stressing the success of this initiative including the innovation dimension as well as the involvement of industry in international cooperation.

– *Engaging with science counsellors*

The work of science counsellors is also a key element in developing the European Partnership and joint or coordinated activities of the Member States and the EU take place through science counsellor's networks in Brasilia, Beijing, Washington or Moscow, amongst others. To strengthen the involvement of science counsellors, SFIC has intensified the involvement of science counsellors in the discussions within each particular Working Group, distributed relevant SFIC documents to science counsellors as a matter of course, and invited science counsellors to SFIC-related events. Moreover, the SFIC Chair was invited to a meeting with EU Science Counsellors on 19 September 2014 in Brussels, where he could disseminate SFIC's work and actions while stressing the appreciation for some of the EU activities (e.g. Destination Europe, R&I tours) as well as pointing out where interactions between SFIC and EU Science Counsellors can be possible.

c. External activities

SFIC contributed to increase the visibility of the external dimension of ERA, with its contribution to workshops and conferences and its presence in major events.

Visibility of SFIC and its work is essential for the success of the European Partnership on S&T cooperation. During the 2014 reporting period, the following milestones were achieved:

– ***Contributing to workshops and conferences***

SFIC has organised and/or contributed to different workshops and conferences related to the SFIC initiatives, providing human and financial resources from Member States and the Commission for such purpose. Examples of workshops and conferences with relevant contribution from SFIC are: the "Workshop on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation" (26 March 2014), the Tour of Brazil events (October/November 2014) and the "Destination Europe Conference" in Atlanta (October 2014). Such events have contributed to enhance the profile of SFIC, to make progress on policy coordination at horizontal level and have counted with the participation of major stakeholders.

– ***Representing SFIC at major events***

SFIC has been systematically represented at major events and conferences addressing issues that are in the remit of SFIC's activities. The SFIC Chair, jointly with the European Commission and the EU Presidency (when appropriate), have participated in high-level events such as the "Destination Europe Conference" in Atlanta, USA, on 17 October. SFIC was also presented at the 6th International seminar during the 7th General assembly of the Brazilian COIMBRA group in Recife, Brazil, in October 2014, where more than 60 Brazilian universities and participants from more than 35 countries were present.

2) *Development of joint EU/MS (AC) - SFIC initiatives*

SFIC successfully identified common priorities and objectives on STI issues with Brazil, USA, China and Russia, and contributed to the development and coordination of joint activities implemented by Member States and the Commission, as stated in the SFIC mandate, through various SFIC initiatives.

a. Brazil

At the beginning of 2014, the Brazil core group worked on a Brazil roadmap and Action Plan focusing on next steps for the Brazil initiative, which was discussed at the SFIC plenaries on 5 February and 19 May 2014, with the following recommendations:

1. Making Europe visible in Brazil including the organisation of Destination Europe events;
2. Sharing of information;
3. Using the whole knowledge triangle: education-research-innovation;
4. Supporting the development of a European initiative to enhance the European participation to the Science without Borders programme;
5. Establishing a European-Brazilian GSO.

Most of the work of the Brazil Working Group during mid-2014 was on its contribution to the various Tour of Brazil (ToB) events (eight all together) that took place over the spring and autumn (April-December) where both capitals and embassies were involved, which helped getting the involvement of higher education institutions, research bodies and companies in the events. ToB events brought visibility for the European STI community. Brazilian States scientific and business communities were very interested and keen to collaborate with the European Union and Member States. At the SFIC plenary on 8 December 2014, Ms. Tiina VIHMA-PUROVAARA (FI), the Brazil Working Group rapporteur, presented the draft Roadmap: One of the issues the Working Group put to the plenary was the development of indicators for measuring the success of the different country activities.

In the beginning of 2014, the group consisted of BE, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, IL, NL, NO, PT, SE and the Commission. In late 2014, ES left the group, but CH joined. The group met once in Brussels (25 March) and once in Belem, Brazil (25 September) and twice by video-conference (5 June and 4 September) during the year.

SFIC endorsed a Roadmap for Brazil and successfully contributed to the Tour of Brazil events organised during 2014 in Brazil.

b. China

The China Working Group had some video-conference and brainstorming meetings during the first half of 2014, with different options for collaboration between the EU/MS and China, which included: 1) A working meeting at technical level; 2) a working level workshop; or 3) a EU/MS-China conference.

Back-to-back to the SFIC plenary on 19 May 2014, the China Working Group met and started working on the preparation of a draft concept paper for an EU/MS-China workshop event in 2015 in China, potentially back-to-back with the EU-China summit either in Brussels or Beijing, as well as a draft China country sheet. The Group started developing the theme of "sustainable urban development" as main topic for the event.

Member States have committed themselves to be responsible for the organisation of the event. The Commission has indicated its readiness to help with the workshop organisation, also by mobilising the BILAT Dragon Star project in this regard.

SFIC worked on the different options for future collaboration between EU/MS and China and worked towards a future EU/MS-China workshop in 2015.

c. USA

During 2014, the USA Working Group was focusing its work on the implementation of the “Approaching USA” action points. Within this, a focus on three topics was adopted during the plenary meeting on 23 September 2014: 1) Enhancing the scale and scope of EU-USA cooperation through thematic cooperation in the field of marine and arctic research; 2) developing the innovation dimension of EU-USA cooperation; and 3) awareness-raising activities, mainly through the Destination Europe campaign.

From September 2014 onwards, phone / video conferences and e-mail discussions of the SFIC USA Working Group took place to discuss in-depth further steps for collaboration with the Galway Implementation Stakeholder Group where SFIC can add value. Due to the publication of the Blue Growth Strategy, the Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy and the Galway Statement, the Commission also welcomed this action line. In line with this activity, representatives of the SFIC USA Working Group (DE, NO) participated in the workshop on Atlantic Ocean research on 6 October 2014 in Rome, organised by the BILAT USA 2.0.

The SFIC USA Working Group was also involved in shaping the programme of the EU-US innovation conference scheduled for January 2015, also organised by the BILAT USA 2.0, aiming at discussing ways to better include innovation aspects in the EU-US S&T agreement.

SFIC also facilitated the communication between Member States and the Commission as regards the organisation of the Destination Europe events in the USA. Two events took place in 2014: one back-to-back with the MIT Career Fair, Boston, on 31 January; another at Georgia Tech Univ., Atlanta, on 17 October. The Chair attended the latter one.

SFIC successfully developed a roadmap for action for EU-USA cooperation to deepen the action plan “Approaching USA”, focusing on ocean & arctic transatlantic research cooperation, on the development of the innovation dimension in EU-USA relations and on implementing the awareness-raising dimension in EU-USA collaboration.

d. Russia

Preliminary meetings to prepare the launch of the SFIC initiative towards Russia took place in February 2014 in Bonn and in March 2014 in Brussels. These meetings were held with the Commission and those Member States/Associated Countries interested in exchanging information and learning from each other's bilateral cooperation with Russia. In these meetings delegations mainly worked on a "Concept note for a SFIC Pilot initiative with Russia". At the SFIC plenary on 19 May 2014, the DE delegation presented this concept paper on Russia and several delegations supported the launching of the initiative despite the unstable political context, as it was believed that work at technical level would not come to a halt. Therefore, SFIC agreed on the launching of a new initiative with Russia with DE as the rapporteur of the initiative.

In the second half of 2014, a workshop took place in Berlin on 22 October focusing on "Internationalisation of the European Research Area: Towards a Common European Approach in STI Cooperation with Russia", which was well attended by 22 representatives from 9 countries plus the Commission. The workshop discussion stressed that it is crucial to address how to cooperate with Russia in the current context and develop the steps for further cooperation in 2015, with the idea of preparing a EU/MS/AC-Russia Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) in the future. The SRIA will define both the thematic as well as the horizontal focus of cooperation with Russia.

SFIC successfully launched a new initiative with Russia and started working on a Roadmap for cooperation with Russia in view of a future EU/MS/AC-Russia Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda.

e. Other

SFIC was regularly informed about the preparations and main outcomes of the **EU-CELAC SOM** that took place in Costa Rica on 3-4 April 2014 as well as all developments on the **EU-Africa High-Level Policy Dialogue** on Science, Technology and Innovation, and other relevant events.

At the SFIC plenary on 23 September 2014, Ms. Florence LELAIT (SFIC Vice-Chair, FR) gave an update on the developments in relation to the PRIMA initiative, focusing on the **Euro-Mediterranean** cooperation context, the various steps towards an Article 185 initiative, the integrated and multi-faceted approach of the programme based on food systems and water resources in interplay with energy, environment, transport and health as well as the more detailed part of the programme: the scientific programme, the activities, the governance structure and the financial issues.

Other relevant policy dialogues (e.g. **Eastern Partnership, India**) were partly in focus, too.

Following the developments in policy dialogue processes has enabled SFIC delegates to improve information flow at national level and prepare senior officials appropriately.

SFIC pooled relevant knowledge and shared information and best practices concerning other third countries and regions.

3) *Best practices and information sharing*

SFIC successfully contributed to sharing and structuring information on international R&I cooperation activities of EU/Member States and third countries, as stipulated in the SFIC mandate.

a. *Presentation of best practices and studies at SFIC plenaries*

SFIC Members and Observers were invited to share their experiences through **presentations of best practices** on STI international (strategy, policy, activities) cooperation initiatives during plenary sessions:

- At the SFIC plenary meeting on 19 May 2014, Mr. Jaani HEINONEN (FI) gave a presentation on **Team Finland** and their work. The Team Finland network brings together various players that promote Finland's external economic relations, the internationalisation of enterprises, investments in Finland and the country's image – both at home and abroad.
- At the SFIC plenary meeting on 23 September 2014, Ms. Marion MIENERT (DE) presented the **German national ERA strategy**, focusing on its sixth priority on international cooperation: "Strengthening and concentrating international cooperation with third countries to secure Europe's global competitiveness, successfully addressing great societal challenges, enhancing the attractiveness of the ERA for talented people and investors".
- At the SFIC plenary on 8 December 2014, Mr. Alexander GRABLOWITZ (DE) gave a presentation on **Germany's Action Plan for international cooperation**, focusing on the Action Plan's four priorities as well as its three generic measures: presence abroad, international monitoring and promoting Germany as a location for Higher Education and R&I.

When it comes to **presentation of studies**, at the 5 February 2014 plenary, Technopolis Group presented the main results of the study "Basic principles for effective STI Agreements", which focused on developing an understanding of STI agreements and exploring the potential scope of umbrella agreements with the implicit goal of contributing to common principles and guidelines for the conduct of international R&I cooperation.

b. Seminar on indicators for international R&I cooperation

The SE delegation organised a seminar on indicators for international R&I cooperation at the office of VINNOVA (Swedish Innovation Agency) on 22 September 2014, with the participation of many SFIC delegates. One of the conclusions was that even though a lot of countries do have internationalisation strategies in STI, as well as indicators measuring international cooperation, the link of the two is often missing. The results of the collected data should in these cases feed back into the 'policy cycle'. Those delegations who attended the workshop were very satisfied with the results and the seminar was a starting point for the future work of SFIC on indicators.

c. Workshop on international research marketing

Back-to-back to the SFIC plenary on 8 December, the DE delegation organised a workshop on 9 December on international research marketing. The SFIC Chair made the workshop opening remarks and many SFIC delegates also participated in the event. The purpose of the workshop was to showcase best practice research marketing activities of Member States and the EU and discuss the possibilities of a common European approach to strengthen the image of the European science landscape abroad – supporting on the one hand national efforts in research marketing and, on the other, going beyond national activities by identifying where joint efforts could create added value.

d. Information sharing by the SFIC Secretariat

In addition to the above-mentioned information sharing practices and to the usual secretariat practices, the SFIC Secretariat has distributed several **Standing Information Points** ahead of SFIC plenary meetings on a variety of issues. Moreover, during 2014 the SFIC Secretariat has continued to disseminate bi-weekly e-mails with information or action requests from the Commission and/or other SFIC Members and Observers, via a **SFIC bi-weekly INFO** every two weeks with relevant documents and information points to all SFIC delegations.

4) *Internal organisation*

a. SFIC Vice-Chair

Ms. Florence LELAIT (FR), who had been SFIC Vice-Chair since 12 November 2013, resigned from her responsibilities of Vice-Chair on 31 October 2014, as she left the French Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research. The position of Vice-Chair remained vacant for the rest of 2014, as no candidacies were received before the SFIC plenary on 8 December.

b. Revision of the SFIC Rules of Procedure and Working Group mandates

The new SFIC Rules of Procedure (ERAC-SFIC 1351/14) were adopted via written procedure on 14 March 2014 and implied the constitution of a **Steering Board**, replacing the previous Task Force, as well as the organisation of SFIC's work via **Working Groups** to be led by a responsible rapporteur. The SFIC Vice-Chair is now responsible for coordinating the input and contributions of the various rapporteurs. Furthermore, the work on each specific country initiative or topic was framed with a mandate. The SFIC plenary on 19 May 2014 adopted mandates for the following Working Groups: Brazil¹², China¹³, Russia¹⁴, USA¹⁵ and common principles¹⁶. The following rapporteurs were nominated:

- Brazil: Tiina Vihma-Purovaara (FI)
- China: Olivier Steffen (FR)
- USA: Claudia Bernarding (DE)
- Russia: Klaus Schindel (DE)
- Common principles: Julia Lewis (UK)

The mandates for the Brazil, USA and Russia Working Groups were adopted with a 2-year time-frame. The mandates for the China and Common Principles Working Groups were adopted with a 1-year time-frame.

¹² ERAC-SFIC 1354/14.

¹³ ERAC-SFIC 1355/14.

¹⁴ ERAC-SFIC 1356/14.

¹⁵ ERAC-SFIC 1357/14.

¹⁶ ERAC-SFIC 1358/14.

c. Preparation of SFIC Work Programme 2015-2016

Both SFIC plenaries on 23 September and 8 December 2014 served as a basis for the discussions on the preparation of the SFIC Work Programme 2015-16. With a draft outline scheme and a draft text, delegations touched upon the priorities and key activities SFIC will be focusing in the next two years. Input emerging from the SFIC Strategic Seminar in Stockholm also added to the discussions.

Annexes to the Sixth SFIC Report of Activities - SFIC Annual Report 2014

- Annex I: SFIC and its mandate.
- Annex II: Summary of SFIC events during 2014 and attendance to other meetings and events by the SFIC Chair, Vice-Chair or SFIC delegates on behalf of SFIC.
- Annex III: SFIC opinion on the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation.
- Annex IV: SFIC opinion on the second ERA Progress Report.
- Annex V: SFIC opinion on the ERA Roadmap.
- Annex VI: Self-assessment of SFIC in the context of the review of the ERA-related groups.

SFIC and its mandate

SFIC is a strategic forum and an advisory body to the Council and the Commission with a view to implementing a European Partnership in the field of international scientific and technological cooperation (S&T cooperation). Member States and the Commission are Members of the Forum while countries associated to the 7th Framework Programme have an observership status. SFIC's objective is to facilitate the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA by the sharing of information and consultation between the partners with a view to identifying common priorities which could lead to coordinated or joint initiatives.

The rationale for such framework is provided by the Council conclusions of 2 December 2008¹⁷, in which the Council invited Member States and the Commission “*to form a European Partnership in the field of international scientific and technological cooperation with a view to implementing a European strategy and to collaborate within a dedicated configuration of CREST to drive forward the European Partnership for S&T cooperation*”. The mandate annexed to the conclusions includes the main tasks of SFIC:

- Systematically sharing and structuring information on the S&T cooperation activities and objectives (whether ongoing or planned) of the various partners;
- Pooling relevant knowledge concerning third countries, in particular analyses of their S&T resources and capabilities;
- Ensuring regular consultation between the partners in order to identify their respective objectives and common priorities in terms of S&T cooperation with third countries;
- Where appropriate, coordinating activities of a similar nature implemented by Member States and the Community (in 'variable geometry');
- If necessary, proposing initiatives to be implemented with appropriate ways and means;
- Networking of Member States' and the Commission's scientific advisors in key third countries.

¹⁷ Official Journal of the European Union, C 18, 24.1.2009, p. 11-13.

Summary of SFIC events during 2014

<i>Event</i>	<i>Number of meetings</i>	<i>Dates</i>
SFIC Plenary	4	5 February 2014 19 May 2014 23 September 2014 8 December 2014
SFIC Steering Board	3	1 April 2014 2 September 2014 6 November 2014
Workshops/seminars	5 (total)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshop on Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation ▪ SFIC Strategic Seminar (Stockholm, Sweden) ▪ Seminar on indicators for international R&I cooperation ▪ Workshop on “Internationalisation of the European Research Area: Towards a Common European Approach in STI Cooperation with Russia” ▪ Workshop on international research marketing 	1 1 1 1 1	26 March 2014 12-13 June 2014 22 September 2014 22 October 2014 9 December 2014

Attendance to other meetings and events
by the SFIC Chair, Vice-Chair or SFIC delegates on behalf of SFIC

- Meeting with the EU-Japan Interest Group and the EU-Korean Interest Group in Brussels (17 June 2014, organized by FP7 BILAT KONNECT and JEUPISTE) - SFIC Chair
- Meeting with the EU Science Counsellors in Brussels (19 September 2014) - SFIC Chair
- ERAC meeting in Venice (2-3 October 2014) - SFIC Chair and SFIC Vice-Chair
- Fraunhofer meeting in Brussels (9 October 2014) - SFIC Chair
- "Destination Europe Conference" in Atlanta, USA (October 2014) - SFIC Chair and SFIC delegates
- ERAC meeting in Brussels (3 December 2014) - SFIC Chair
- ERAC Steering Board meetings in Brussels (through the year 2014) - SFIC Chair

**SFIC Opinion on
the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international cooperation**

1. Background of SFIC's work

In its Conclusions of 30 May 2013¹⁸, the Council: “Invites SFIC, in light of the new strategic approach proposed by the Commission, to contribute to the design and development of the multi-annual roadmaps in collaboration and open discussion with the relevant stakeholders, while developing joint research and innovation agendas between the Union, Member States and strategic partners in third countries”.

A first discussion was held in SFIC on 12 November 2013, concluding that the contribution to the roadmaps is an important task for SFIC and announcing the launch of a consultation with SFIC Members and Observers (with deadline on 15 December 2013) as an essential step to receive input from the Member States.

A questionnaire prepared by the Commission was sent out during the autumn and the process was further discussed at the SFIC plenary meeting on 5 February 2014. The Commission announced the organisation of a workshop on 26 March 2014 in order to discuss each of the ten roadmaps¹⁹.

The workshop was attended by the SFIC Chair, the Vice-Chair and 23 participants representing SFIC Members and Observers. The countries represented were Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The SFIC Secretariat was also present.

The Commission provided a summary of the workshop.

¹⁸ Doc. 10318/13

¹⁹ Nine countries (Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Korea, Russia, South Africa and USA) and one region (Southern Mediterranean) are covered by the roadmaps.

2. SFIC's recommendations to the Commission

SFIC welcomes the summary provided by the Commission and would in particular like to emphasize the following points to be taken into account in the short and the long term during the roadmaps design and development. Recommendations refer to the content and the process as:

Recommendations regarding the content (short term):

- The roadmaps should better emphasize the EU-added value and indicate the analytical basis for the selection of the priorities (including the analysis of the STI strategy of the partner country/region) also taking into account past and current SFIC work under SFIC country initiatives.
- A number of aspects in the roadmap for South Africa were highlighted as good practice and could be used as a ‘blue print’ or ‘template’.
- References to intergovernmental initiatives, e.g. Joint Programming Initiatives (JPI) and the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) should be included where relevant.
- The issues of reciprocity in opening national programmes, mutual interest and shared benefits, as well as obstacles and framework conditions for access to S&T systems within 3rd countries should be dealt with.
- Additional information regarding relevant policy reforms in key partner countries may be provided as appropriate, together with information regarding any commitments made by key partner countries to provide public funding to 3rd country participants who do not qualify for automatic funding under Horizon 2020.
- It is important to address the links between bilateral and bi-regional approaches to cooperation appropriately. The ongoing STI-dialogues between the EU and regions (e.g. CELAC, AU) could form a basis for establishing the roadmaps with the regions.
- The roadmaps should take into consideration the EU external and development policies and the EU Member States' policies. In particular, innovation should feature in the strategic approach towards key partners/regions. The Commission could, if appropriate, also consider including the whole “knowledge triangle” in future roadmaps.

Recommendations regarding the process (long term):

- A structured consultation and implementation process for the roadmaps should be clearly defined and communicated. A realistic timeframe should be developed, from gathering input from other policy DGs in the Commission and Member States to the inter-service consultation procedure, to the publishing of the Multi-Annual roadmaps. In order to achieve desired synergies, the roadmaps should be coordinated in the same time frame as the preparation of the Horizon 2020 strategic programming cycle.
- The approach should be more challenge-based rather than thematic, when appropriate, and also plan for follow-up and monitoring. This would facilitate a more proactive approach, by allowing for new avenues of cooperation instead of confirming existing ones.
- At present there are ten roadmaps, for nine countries and one region. The Commission's strategy for international STI cooperation²⁰ identifies three country groups and explicitly encourages bi-regional dialogues. SFIC is prepared to give input on the relevance of strategic countries/regions (including the balance between a country-focus and a regional-focus) to be covered in future multi-annual roadmaps.

3. SFIC's future contribution to the roadmaps process

SFIC intends to continue contributing to the multi-annual roadmaps process in the future, e.g., when the roadmaps will be presented by the Commission in the autumn of 2014 or during subsequent updates.

SFIC advises the Commission to continue the organization of workshops on the multiannual roadmaps as ongoing, annual discussion and orientation forums in line with the well-placed workshop organised in March 2014 in Brussels.

SFIC would welcome a consultation on the STI strategy as a whole, including the Commission's strategy in international fora and organizations (e.g. Belmont Forum).

²⁰ Commission Communication on "Enhancing and Focusing EU International Cooperation in Research and Innovation: A Strategic Approach" of 14/09/2012 (COM (2012) 497 final).

SFIC opinion on the second ERA Progress Report

The first ERA Progress Report²¹ referred to international cooperation and concluded that the realisation of ERA will ‘facilitate international cooperation in research and innovation and create a global level playing field’.

Through a SFIC opinion on the first ERA Progress Report²², SFIC recommended that the external dimension should be much more elaborated in the second ERA Progress Report 2014 – both at EU level and Member State level, notably by moving towards the integration of the “international cooperation monitoring mechanism” into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism.

The Council Conclusions on European Research Area Progress from 21 February 2014²³, dealing with the first ERA Progress report, took into account the input from SFIC. The Council, considering the external dimension as an integral part of the ERA, asked the Commission to adequately address this important aspect in the second ERA Progress Report and beyond, notably by moving towards the integration of an international cooperation dimension into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism.

The second ERA Progress Report²⁴ issued by the Commission in September 2014, stresses the importance of the international dimension being mainstreamed across all the ERA priorities, with the rationale that international cooperation "should be enhanced as a cross-cutting priority of the ERA actions". SFIC is expecting this issue to be subject of a more comprehensive analysis within the next ERA Progress Report. In this regard, SFIC would like to state that:

²¹ Doc. 13812/13 (COM(2013) 637 final).

²² Doc. ERAC-SFIC 1356/13.

²³ Doc. 6945/14.

²⁴ Doc. 13197/14 (COM (2014) 575 final).

- *SFIC WELCOMES the mainstreaming of international cooperation across all ERA priorities and STRESSES that international cooperation is an essential part of ERA and should not only be considered in its horizontal dimension being reflected in policy measures at all relevant levels, but also as a separate ‘sixth priority’, as agreed by the Council and ERAC.*

- *SFIC STRESSES the importance of making real progress on the integration of the “international cooperation monitoring mechanism” as sixth ERA priority into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism; WELCOMES the first step of including indicators measuring the international dimension of ERA; and RECOMMENDS Member States and the Commission, with the contribution of SFIC, to further identify the appropriate input/output indicators for this purpose.*

- *SFIC INVITES the Commission and Member States, with a view to mainstreaming the international dimension in the different ERA priorities, to jointly identify as soon as possible a clear baseline and define the appropriate objectives to be achieved within each of the different priorities.*

SFIC opinion on the ERA Roadmap**1) BACKGROUND**

The Council Conclusions on progress in the European Research Area²⁵ (ERA) invited *"Member States in close cooperation with the Commission, considering the ERAC opinion and working through ERAC, to develop by mid-2015 an ERA roadmap at European level, which should serve the purpose of facilitating and reinforcing the efforts undertaken by the Member States"*. Furthermore, the Conclusions stated that *"the external dimension is an integral part of the ERA"*.

Following the invitation from the Council, the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) is currently working on the development of the ERA Roadmap. The Strategic Forum for International Science and Technological Cooperation (SFIC) would therefore like to contribute to ERAC's work on the ERA Roadmap focusing on issues relevant to the SFIC area of activities, in particular on the external dimension of the European Research Area.

2) PROCESS

ERAC is keen to have the involvement of the ERA-related groups in the process of developing the ERA Roadmap and ERAC delegates have provided inputs on the six ERA Priorities - including international cooperation as the 6th ERA Priority - and consulted within their administrations and with stakeholders at national level in view of a discussion at the ERAC plenary meeting on 3 October 2014.

The Chair and Vice-Chair of SFIC were invited together with the Chairs of the other ERA-related groups to the Plenary meeting of ERAC in October 2014 to provide input for a list of key actions linked to the six priorities with a view to develop the ERA Roadmap. SFIC had a first discussion at its Plenary in September 2014.

²⁵ Doc. 6353/14.

3) RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SFIC welcomes and supports ERAC's structure for the ERA Roadmap with **international cooperation as a clear and differentiated 6th priority**, underlining the importance of international cooperation as an essential part of ERA. Substantial progress is required in the way international cooperation is reflected in policy measures at all levels, including EU, national and stakeholder levels. It is important to have a stand-alone priority focusing on the external dimension of ERA as well as **international cooperation considered as cross-cutting priority across all the other ERA priorities and actions.**
2. The EU, Member States and Associated Countries should take advantage of the best research and innovation worldwide. In this context, SFIC stresses the importance of having a **Top Action Priority** in the ERA Roadmap based on:

Develop and implement joint strategic approaches and actions for international S&T cooperation on the basis of national priorities, as appropriate.

This will include enhancing **multilateral S&T cooperation approaches** (e.g. towards tackling grand societal challenges).

3. A more coherent view of Europe as a partner should be promoted, where possible. This will be achieved by ensuring a **better coordination of national and EU policies and actions** on international S&T regarding third countries and international fora, with the possibility of using SFIC as a platform.
4. The **mainstreaming of the international dimension within Horizon 2020 initiatives and actions** should be a priority. Furthermore, SFIC invites the European Commission to consult Member States through SFIC when developing the **Multi-Annual Roadmaps** for cooperation with third countries on S&T as well as in the context of the **EU's joint committee meetings and policy dialogues** with third countries, where the participation of SFIC representatives should be encouraged.

It is worth noting that the above-mentioned issues stem from discussions within SFIC, including the messages provided by delegates in the recent self-assessment exercise, issues discussed at the SFIC Strategic Seminar on 12-13 June 2014 in Stockholm as well as the preliminary discussions on the SFIC Work Programme 2015-16.

4) SFIC'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ERA ROADMAP

SFIC is the appropriate platform to facilitate the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA by coordinating the cooperation between Member States and the EU towards international partner countries. SFIC is ready to have an essential role in the further development and implementation of the ERA Roadmap:

- a) By providing input during the development process of the ERA Roadmap, that is up until its foreseen adoption in May 2015. SFIC has planned two plenary meetings on 8 December 2014 and 4 March 2015, where the Roadmap will be on the agenda;
- b) By contributing to the mainstreaming of the international dimension in the other five ERA priorities to ensure consistency;
- c) By providing early support to the European Commission regarding the further development of the Multi-Annual Roadmaps for international R&I cooperation with third countries;
- d) By encouraging the discussion and exchange of good practices regarding S&T agreements at both EU and Member State level, and developing recommendations for better coordination in this regard;
- e) By supporting the further work on indicators for international cooperation in the context of the ERA Monitoring Mechanism and the R&I Observatory.

Activities and actions dealing with the above-mentioned points will be considered in the forthcoming SFIC Work Programme 2015-2016.

SFIC has an essential role to play in the future implementation of the ERA Roadmap as the ERA group responsible for international cooperation.

**Self-assessment of the Strategic Forum for international S&T cooperation (SFIC)
in the context of the review of the ERA-related groups**

1. BACKGROUND FOR THE SELF-ASSESSMENT/REVIEW EXERCISE

In its resolution of 30 May 2013 (doc. 10331/13), the Council has asked for a review of the ERA-related groups established by the Council to be done by the end of 2014:

“5. AGREES that the statuses, the mandates and the reporting lines of those ERA-related groups that have been established by the Council should be reviewed by the end of 2014 and INVITES the Commission and the Committee itself to consider whether such a review is required in relation to the groups that they have established; such reviews could be carried out on the basis of (1) an assessment of the extent to which mutual cooperation, consultation and coordination as called for by the Council have effectively been achieved, (2) the timeliness and effectiveness of their advice, and (3) the efficiency of the functioning of these groups”.

Following a decision by the SFIC plenary on 19 May 2014, the SFIC has conducted, via an online questionnaire, a self-assessment of its activities according to

- its mandate: Council conclusions on a European Partnership for international S&T cooperation (doc. 16763/08);
- the Council conclusions regarding SFIC activities: Council conclusions on the development of ERA (doc. 11032/11); on international R&I cooperation (doc. 10318/13); and on the ERA Progress (doc. 6945/14);
- the Council resolution of 30 May 2013 (doc. 10331/13) on the advisory work of the ERA.

17 Member States answered the questionnaire - Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom - as well as 2 Associated Countries - Moldova and Norway. The Netherlands also submitted some written input but out of the questionnaire. The questionnaire provided both a quantitative and qualitative assessment of SFIC's work. A more detailed account to the responses of the questionnaire is included in the Annex.

2. RESULTS OF SFIC'S SELF-ASSESSMENT

From the answers to the questionnaire it is very evident that SFIC Members are to a large extent satisfied or very satisfied with the overall results achieved through the work of SFIC and its impact on developing the international dimension of ERA since 2008. This regards sharing and pooling information as much as identifying common priorities towards cooperation with third countries. But apart from the general positive opinion, several ideas for streamlining and extending SFIC activities in the future have been addressed. Furthermore, SFIC Members see a clear need for change regarding certain aspects of the framework conditions for the work of SFIC in order to further enhance its impact and fully unfold its potential.

SFIC's achievements

SFIC Members have especially highlighted in their answers the following achievements of SFIC's work:

- (1) SFIC, as an advisory body to the Council and to the Commission, has proved its added-value and it has had a clear impact on developing the international dimension of ERA. This has been done for example through opinions on the ERA framework of 18 November 2011 (where SFIC highlighted the international nature of science and its political environment) as well as on the ERA Progress Report, or by promoting the integration of the international dimension into the ERA monitoring mechanism and by contributing to the Multi-Annual Roadmaps. Other contributions by SFIC concern its input to the Council Conclusions on 'Enhancing and Focusing EU International Cooperation in Research and Innovation: a Strategic Approach'.
- (2) SFIC welcomes the work that has been done since its creation at the end of 2008, for instance on the initiatives towards India, USA, China, Brazil and, more recently, Russia. SFIC Members and Observers participating in the initiatives find it now easier to speak with a coherent voice when dealing with countries where a SFIC initiative has been launched.
 - a. SFIC has provided a platform for EU/MS coordination and collaboration even if the impact of SFIC contributions has in some cases been lower than expected;

- b. SFIC has developed a systematic approach to define a strategic research and innovation agenda towards priority countries (1. State-of-play; 2. Priority-setting in a strategic research and innovation agenda; 3. Implementation) relying on relevant activities (workshops, reports, compendium of activities, etc.);
 - c. SFIC plays its role as platform for information sharing on Science and Technology (S&T) cooperation activities and objectives;
 - d. SFIC contributes to the development of the knowledge triangle as far as it considers framework conditions (IPR, standards, doctoral level ...);
 - e. SFIC has contributed to the development of the Multi-Annual Roadmaps as asked by the Council by giving a sound information basis as well as having exchanges and consultation with the Commission. A dedicated SFIC opinion on the issue has also been adopted.
- (3) SFIC's advice can be highly effective for both large and small countries, e.g. they benefit from information and best practices sharing as well as from the strategic advice defined by SFIC.
- (4) SFIC welcomes the awareness-raising activities in third countries to make EU/MS partners aware of excellent research in Europe and to show concrete opportunities to work in Europe (e.g. Destination Europe conferences in the US, Tour of India, Tour of China, Tour of Brazil).

Suggestions for advancing SFIC activities

Even if the general opinion on the SFIC achievements hitherto is mainly positive, several SFIC Members voiced specific suggestions for the further development of SFIC's work:

- (5) The participation rate of delegations and the framework in which SFIC operates could be improved. The involvement of more SFIC Members and Observers in SFIC activities should be encouraged.
- (6) Networking and interaction with other stakeholders could be enhanced. This regards the relationship between SFIC and the science counsellor networks in third countries, closer consultations and links with BILAT/INCONET project teams as well as the dialogue with stakeholders, particularly with the potential recipients of its opinions and advice.

- (7) SFIC should expand the analytical scope of its work and its range of activity:
- a. SFIC should foster the analysis of third countries' resources and capabilities relying on studies and deliverables for instance from INCO projects funded by FP7 and Horizon 2020 as well as from Joint Programming international activities;
 - b. SFIC should discuss on further countries/regions where SFIC could have a role;
 - c. Regarding the Multi-Annual Roadmaps, SFIC should engage in a forward perspective and deliver valuable input to further develop the Multi-Annual Roadmaps process. SFIC should also be a key actor for developing concepts for international cooperation in Horizon 2020;
 - d. SFIC should address not only the geographical focus of the Multi-Annual Roadmaps, but also the bilateral or multilateral instruments for international cooperation in Horizon 2020;
 - e. Indicators measuring international cooperation have to be further defined;
 - f. SFIC should take more into account the third pillar of the knowledge triangle: higher education (e.g. doctoral level).
- (8) The impact of SFIC contributions has in some cases been lower than expected. SFIC should therefore put more focus on impact and results:
- a. SFIC should take further efforts that its recommendations on priority countries are strongly taken into account in Multi-Annual Roadmaps, in Horizon 2020 calls, intergovernmental initiatives (e.g. joint programming initiatives);
 - b. SFIC should reflect where and how added value of an EU effort can be reached with respect to some common principles for international cooperation;
 - c. SFIC's strategic inputs should also be made known and used at national level;
 - d. SFIC should reflect how its strategic advice could also be communicated more efficiently to end-users.

Framework conditions for SFIC's advice

As the suggestions show, SFIC can still enhance its scope of activities, but some framework conditions need to be changed on an external level in order to make SFIC's work more effective and to ensure that SFIC is able to provide timely and effective advice. The following suggestions were made during the assessment in order to improve the SFIC consultation process:

- (9) The consultation process of SFIC could be improved:
- a. SFIC needs a structured process to provide early advice about the implementation of the strategy for international S&T cooperation and Horizon 2020;
 - b. SFIC should be consulted as soon as decisions or documents with foreseeable impact on international S&T cooperation are prepared or drafted within the usual decision-making processes (e.g. contribution to policy dialogues, preparation of bilateral and bi-regional summits). SFIC should more regularly and timely be informed about discussions in relevant committees (e.g. Research Working Party, geographical working parties...);
 - c. SFIC's advice should have a role in shaping the external dimension of the ERA (as a cross-cutting and integrated part of ERA) but also in contributing to international S&T cooperation as a whole;
 - d. SFIC's advisory role should be reinforced by keeping SFIC informed on High Level Groups targeting priority countries (e.g. India);
 - e. SFIC should be more engaged in the bi-regional cooperation strategies and activities, e.g. EU-Africa, EU-CELAC, EU-ASEAN.

Relations between SFIC, ERAC and other ERA-related groups

- (10) SFIC is in contact with other ERA-related groups and the SFIC Chair is regularly invited to meetings of ERA-related groups' chairs organized by ERAC. However, the interaction between SFIC, ERAC and ERA-related groups could be enhanced. International cooperation still lacks visibility in the ERA:
- a. SFIC would welcome closer interactions with ERAC and other ERA-related groups: ERAC and ERA-related groups could express what they expect from SFIC; Joint activities could be organized;
 - b. More coordination at national level is needed between delegates of the different ERA-related groups;
 - c. The integration of the international dimension into the European Monitoring Mechanism should contribute to increase its visibility and therefore its impact at European level;
 - d. SFIC should transmit key messages on international S&T cooperation to the other ERA-related groups;
 - e. SFIC should be consulted to contribute to the ERA roadmap.

The current SFIC mandate

The SFIC Members finally expressed their thoughts on the possible change of the SFIC mandate.

- (11) Should the mandates for ERA-related groups' be revised, a new mandate for SFIC could:
- a. Introduce the innovation dimension;
 - b. Acknowledge that SFIC needs financial resources (e.g. from the European Commission, Horizon 2020, etc.) to perform its activities and fulfill its role effectively;
 - c. Reflect on giving advice to the Council and to the Commission on ways that can have an impact on the strategic bilateral and bi-regional dialogues;
 - d. Underline the need to propose forward-looking activities and their implementation (e.g. JRC's work);
 - e. Introduce the necessary collaboration between SFIC and ERAC and other ERA-related groups;
 - f. Change the reporting period to Council and Commission and submit a report of activities every two years.

3. KEY MESSAGES TO COUNCIL, COMMISSION AND ERAC

- Delegations welcome the work done by SFIC since its creation at the end of 2008 in contributing to the external dimension of the ERA as well as to international S&T cooperation as a whole;
- SFIC's advice can be highly effective for both large and small countries;
- SFIC should not only focus on geographical priorities and on forward looking activities, but also on instruments for international S&T cooperation as well as impact and results;
- SFIC should be consulted as soon as decisions or documents with foreseeable impact on international S&T cooperation are prepared or drafted within the usual decision-making processes (e.g. policy dialogues, preparation of bilateral and bi-regional summits);
- The involvement of more SFIC Members and Observers in SFIC activities should be promoted;
- Collaboration between SFIC, ERAC and ERA-related groups should be strengthened as well as with stakeholders and science counsellors networks;
- Further coordination at national level between national delegates in the different ERA-related groups should also be encouraged;
- In case the mandates of the ERA-related groups are revised, SFIC would like to see some modifications to its current mandate to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its work.

OVERVIEW OF MAIN RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- 76.5% of respondents are satisfied and 5.9% very satisfied with the way SFIC has fulfilled its mandate concerning **sharing and structuring information**.
- 68.4% of respondents believe SFIC has fulfilled its mandate as regards **pooling knowledge concerning third countries**.
- 73.7% of respondents are positive as regards having fulfilled the mandate to **identify objectives and common priorities with third countries**.
- Only 42.1% of respondents estimate that the task of **coordinating activities of a similar nature implemented by Member States and the Community** is fulfilled, against 36.8% who do not think so, and 21.1% without any opinion.
- 61.5% of respondents are satisfied with the work done as **regards proposing initiatives to be implemented with appropriate ways and means**.
- 77.8% of respondents are satisfied with the way **SFIC continued its advisory work with its initiatives** such as with India, China, Brazil and others.
- 41.7% of respondents are indifferent and another 41.7% are satisfied as regards **networking of scientific advisors in key third countries**. Only 16.7% are dissatisfied.
- 64.7% are satisfied with **the way ERA-related groups have functioned at a strategic level**.
- 58.3% are satisfied and 16.7% are very satisfied about SFIC's role to reconfirm the **need for strengthened coordination between ERAC and the ERA-related groups**.
- 89.5% consider that SFIC has contributed to the development of the **Multi-Annual Roadmaps**.
- 73.1% consider that SFIC has contributed to the development of **common principles** for international R&I cooperation.
- 72.7% are satisfied about the way SFIC has contributed towards supporting the implementation and monitoring of progress of the **Innovation Union** initiative.